

A
RATIONAL DEFENCE
OF THE
English Reformation
AND
PROTESTANT RELIGION:

In a Series of DISCOURSES on the most
essential Points of Controversy between
PROTESTANTS and PAPISTS.

Compiled from the WORKS of the
most eminent DIVINES of the Church of
ENGLAND.

By the Author of the
System of Divinity and Morality.

L O N D O N:
Printed for R. Griffiths at the Dunciad in St. Paul's
Church-Yard. 1752.

English History
AND
Protestant Religion

in a series of courses on the most
important points of controversy between
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Compiled from the works of
more than 100 of the best
English writers



By the Author of the
English History
AND
Protestant Religion
— W —
LONDON
Printed at the British Museum

To the most Reverend

THOMAS

Lord Archbishop of

CANTERBURY.

My Lord,

IF an attempt to establish the truths of natural and revealed religion, by just reasoning and solid arguments ; if to recommend the sincere practice of those duties, which both require, and to impress on the minds of men true principles of virtue and religion, after the gospel simplicity ; if to examine impartially into the causes, grounds, and reasons, of our reforming from the church of *Rome*, to confute fairly and rationally the many erroneous doctrines of that church, and to vindicate our reformation from their unjust reflections and aspersions ; if to warn protestants of the evil and danger of popery, and assist them to oppose the enemy in their artful stratagems to make profelytes to their irrational scheme of religion ; or rather to a political system, that abounds in fallacy and chicanery ; If these are subjects of so much

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moment and importance, as to deserve a free and candid discussion; if such views are in themselves honest, laudable, and praise-worthy; then it may be hoped, that a design so well calculated as this, which contains the sentiments and reasoning of our most eminent divines, will be entertained with candour, and not only meet with the countenance and protection of your grace, but also receive the approbation and encouragement of all good christians and sincere protestants.

But as in our age nothing is acceptable, unless patronized or recommended by some eminent person, this made me presume most humbly to implore your grace's patronage of this work, in regard to the usefulness of it. And, who, my Lord, so proper to espouse and encourage an attempt, the sole view of which is to promote the knowledge and practice of virtue and religion, and to refute the errors of popery, as that great and good prelate, who has true christianity so much at heart; and who, in the midst of imminent danger, withstood the furious efforts of the proclaimed enemy of our civil and religious rights and liberties, when he had invaded our land, with an intent to dethrone our most excellent king, and to establish popery and arbitrary power amongst a protestant free people?

This noble exertion of your grace's courage, interest, and influence, to animate our friends, and intimidate our enemies, at so critical and dangerous a conjuncture, as then attended

your

your situation at *York*, will be recorded in our annals, and had in everlasting remembrance by all sincere protestants, as a most evident demonstration of your unfeigned zeal and affection for religion, and the rights and properties of FREE BRITONS.

But, my lord, I could not have taken this great liberty, had not the first five volumes of the *system of divinity and morality*, compiled from the works of the most eminent divines of our church, been received by the public so favourably, as to give encouragement for offering another volume, in discharge of the promise made in the preface to that work.

It would be both highly impertinent and presumptuous, to attempt a display of those excellent virtues and accomplishments of mind, which are so manifestly conspicuous in the primate and metropolitan of our protestant church; but, my Lord, though your grace's exalted character is of too delicate a nature, for me to delineate, yet permit me with the innumerable *many*, to admire and revere that affable, humane, benevolent disposition, and christian temper, which so eminently adorn a prelate, advanced by our gracious sovereign, to the greatest spiritual dignity within his dominions; and whose wise choice has received the concurrent approbation and applause of the whole nation.

These amiable qualities in your grace, are acknowledged, by protestants of all denominations,

nations, not only in our three kingdoms, but in the most distant countries; all with one accord, however they differ in other points, unanimously agreeing to give their joint testimony, in confirmation thereof.

May the great governor of the universe, long preserve your grace, to preside over our most excellent church; to be the honour and glory of it: and may all our bishops and clergy strive to imitate your piety, condescension, benevolence, love of truth and charity, that so peace, unity, and true christianity may by means of such prevalent examples of virtue and religion, yet farther encrease and abound in this nation: These are the hearty prayers and sincere wishes of,

My Lord,

Your Grace's most Obedient

24 OCT 62

Humble Servant,

The Author.

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P R E F A C E.

THE favourable reception, which the system of divinity and morality has met with, encourages me to perform the promise made in the preface to that work, of publishing a volume of discourses on the most essential points in difference between protestants and papists; believing with the learned bishop Sprat, "that if a judicious sum, and full epitome, were collected from the controversies between us and the church of Rome, it would be as useful a body of controversy on those questions, as any yet extant." And if we consider how numerous and vigilant the priests, jesuits, and other emissaries of Rome are, in all parts of this kingdom, to make proselytes to their corrupt and idolatrous church, by deluding and perverting the minds of ignorant or unwary protestants, no time can be more seasonable than the present, for a treatise against popery, in defence of our reformation, thereby to secure the present members of our church in its communion, and prevent, if possible, a farther defection from it.

By the method here taken, which has not been before attempted, the reader will have the satisfaction to see within a short compass, the chief of those absurd tenets, and most erroneous doctrines professed in the papal system of religion, fairly stated, calmly considered, and rationally refuted, by some of the most learned divines of our established church; an advantage this, considering also the easy purchase, that will, it is presumed, render this little tract worthy the notice and perusal of all judicious and sincere protestants.

Archbishop Tillotson, says Burnet, "saw that popery was at the root of atheism and impiety, and

that the design seemed to be laid, to make us first atheists, that we might the more easily be made papists; and that many did not stick to own, that we could have no certainty, even for the christian faith, unless we believed the infallibility of what they called the church. This gave him a deep and just indignation; on this the foundation was laid of his great zeal against popery, and which made him to set the whole strength of his thoughts and studies to withstand the progress, that infidelity was making. He looked on the whole complex of popery, as such a corruption of the design of christianity, that he thought it was incumbent on him, to set himself against it, with the zeal and courage which became that cause, and was necessary for those times. He thought the idolatry and superstition of the church of Rome did enervate true piety and morality; and that their cruelty was such a contradiction to the meekness of Christ, and to that love and charity which he made the character and distinction of his disciples and followers, that he resolved to sacrifice every thing but a good conscience, in a cause for which he had resolved, if it should come to extremities, to become a sacrifice himself."

We have here the sense, the conduct and resolution of one of the greatest and best of men; and we ought to make a proper use thereof, to serve the true interests of religion, and prevent the growth of what so manifestly tends to its ruin; and as it may be presumed, that the former part of the system of divinity and morality, will have a good tendency to stem the tide of infidelity and impiety, so will this volume, it is hoped, be of use likewise, to detect and refute the errors of popery, and restrain, in some degree, the farther increase of it.

In truth, popery in its best shape and mildest form, is very dreadful to a protestant people. But if we view popery in the throne, this carries in it every thing

thing terrible to protestants and Englishmen; persecutions, massacres, fire and faggot, miseries and calamities insupportable, not to be described by any pen, must be the inevitable consequences attending it. What then will it be, should God as a punishment for our national sins, ever suffer it to come upon us, armed with all the rage that merciless cruelty and revenge, and sad despair can inspire? What bounds or limits can confine it? What temper of moderation can be expected, from such whose tender mercies are cruel, upon the return of a superstitious religion, after an exile of so many years, when it comes to be established by law? What justice, what equity, can we reasonably hope for, from an insulting enemy, flushed with success, (should this ever happen, which God avert) after so many signal disappointments; and whose inbred hatred to us, has been excited and inflamed by innumerable instances of opposition and resentment; nay, by oaths of abjuration and exclusion? So that no misfortunes, no evils, nothing can be so dreadful to this nation, so destructive of its religion and liberties, as the having popery ever placed in the throne of those kingdoms.

SOME among us have seen with their eyes, what the spirit of popery is; and history will inform ALL what it was to our ancestors. Let us not then be so forgetful, as not to remember what is past, or so weak, as to stand in need of another woeful experiment to convince us, that a popish reign is absolutely inconsistent with a reformed church and nation. How near was this kingdom in 1688, to tyranny and oppression, destruction and despair? And what would not a protestant of any ability then have given, that a popish prince had been legally excluded, from ever enjoying this protestant crown?

Happy REVOLUTION! ungrateful the enemies and despisers of it! since all the safety of our church and reformation, all the enjoyment of our rights and liberties,

erties, all the improvement of our trade and commerce, all the glory of our fleets and armies, all our strength and influence abroad, all our security and peace at home; ALL that is valuable to Englishmen as PROTESTANTS, or to TRUE BRITONS as FREE men, have been solely owing under God, to that work of providence, the GLORIOUS REVOLUTION.

And yet that happiness, great as it was, would have been incomplete, and long since extinguished, had not the succession to the imperial crown of these realms been settled in the protestant line, which could only secure the former blessing. And thro' the mercy and goodness of God, it has been the means of procuring to us, our present most gracious sovereign, whose administration has been eminently wise, just and equitable; whose regard to our laws and constitution has been sacred and unblemished; whose agreement with his two houses of parliament, and their fidelity to him, have been mutually constant, firm and steady; and who by the happy increase of his royal family, has entailed future felicity, both on this nation, and the subjects of another kingdom, of other states and powers; and may providence grant him long to live and reign over us.

It was the advice of bishop Burnet to the clergy, that they should "study and well understand the controversies of the church of Rome, chiefly those concerning infallibility and transubstantiation; for in managing those, their missionaries have a particular address. That they should learn to view popery in a true light, as a conspiracy to exalt the power of the clergy, even by subjecting the most sacred truths of religion to contrivances for raising their authority, and of offering to the world another method of being saved, besides that prescribed in the gospel. Popery is a mass of impostures, supported by men who manage them with great advantages, and impose them with inexpressible severities, on those who dare not call in question what they dictate

to them*—Again, says the good bishop, "our country ought to understand popery well, to view it in its politics, as well as in its religious corruptions; that they may observe and guard against their secret practices; particularly that main one, that prevails so fatally among us, of making us despise the foreign churches, and hate the dissenters at home. The whole body of protestants if united, might be an equal match to the church of Rome. It is much superior to them in wealth and in force, if it were animated with the zeal which the jesuits spread through their whole communion: whereas the reformed are cold and unconcerned, as well as disjointed, in matters that relate to religion."

Let us therefore resolve like honest true Britons, never more to submit to that papal yoke, which our ancestors so gloriously threw off, and would no longer endure. Let not popery and arbitrary power ever be considered by us, in a careless light, or as things despicable. Let us not violate our laws, break our oaths, bring scandal and ruin on our native country, and all for the sake of a popish, abjured, and revengeful pretender. But if any protestants, if any who call themselves ministers of the church of England, should espouse that cause, how they can excuse it to their own conscience, if they have any such guide, or to their own reason, if they have any such rule, it must be difficult to determine. However,

If rational intelligent beings will be governed by truth and reason, as their great creator intended they should be, and will impartially exercise their reasonable faculties, free from all prejudices and prepossessions; then I persuade myself, that all who make a fair and candid enquiry after truth, will receive full satisfaction in the perusal of this little tract; where all the most essential points, in which we differ from the church of Rome, are clearly and truly represented; where

no Conclusion to the history of his own times.

are also sufficiently inculcated and fully displayed, the great hazard and danger of our embracing that religion, and of having a popish prince to govern these protestant kingdoms; from which the greatest of all evils, good Lord deliver us, and our posterity for evermore.

I cannot conclude better than in the words of the present learned bishop of Norwich; "Popery, that determined enemy of truth and liberty, seeing us grown indifferent about the best religion, lays hold of the favourable junctures, and labours with indefatigable zeal, to bring back the worst: whilst the emissaries of that communion, having been long banished from the cabinet of our princes, under various shapes and disguises, mix with the dregs of the people, to corrupt their faith, and poison their loyalty."

Sermon on the 30th of Jan. 1749.

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DIS.

DISCOURSE I. Bp. Burnet.

A general view of popery.

*Mat. 15. 9.**But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.*

ALL corruptions in religion flow either from some principles in the people, that are led and guided by others, which render them obnoxious to such as have an interest to work on their credulity; or, from the views and advantages that their leaders may propose to themselves, in managing the people so as to bring them under their power. As to the people, there are two things in the nature of man, that make it easy for him to receive such abuses, as may gratify the weak side of his constitution. The one is a disposition to represent God to the senses, in some idolatrous or superstitious way; and to fancy, that the deity is pleased with some magnificent or pompous submissions paid to that external object, by which, religion becomes a mere pageantry, grateful only to a weak unthinking multitude. The other is a disposition in men, to love such a religion as may best be reconciled to an ill life, as gives them the most hopes to appease God, and make him some recompence for the bad things they have done, by some other way, than a real reformation of life. There is in all men some inclination to fear the deity, both in order to secure their present quiet, and the fears of future misery: But then there is also in them, a great disposition to seek forbidden pleasure or profit; therefore any doctrine that can

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reconcile

reconcile these together, is like to find many ready to receive it. Besides these, there are two other principles in the nature of man, which very much tempt the guides and leaders of others, to infuse errors and corruptions into the minds of their weak and easy followers. The one is a design of raising their own authority. The love of empire is natural to man ; and empire over mens thoughts and consciences, has such an attractive, as to work strongly on all, who are deluded thereby. The other is a desire of wealth and ease ; the one furnishing the instrument, the other giving the leisure, to pursue all the pleasures a man can desire : That both these will naturally influence all men, particularly such as think they have fair opportunities put into their hands, to accomplish these ends, is little to be doubted. — Having thus observed what are the sources, from whence all corruptions spring in matters of religion, both in the credulous multitude, and the practising priests, I will next consider, what rules the gospel has laid down for preventing the ill effects of these, and indeed for stopping the fountains from whence they spring.

For the first, we find in the old testament, that all sort of idolatry, or the proposing any outward object to our senses in divine worship, was plainly forbidden, altho' in that dispensation, there were greater allowances made for the gross imaginations of a people, who were fond of sensible things in divine worship. But in the new testament, this is carried much higher ; even those multitude of rites which were allowed to the *Jews*, are taken away ; for as *God is a spirit, we must worship him in spirit and truth* *. To believe in, to pray to, and praise him, as the author of all the good we enjoy or hope for ; to have such an inward sense of his perfections, as may make us imitate these in ourselves, is the great

* John 4. 24.

great design of the Christian religion ; in which we are not so much to consider divine worship as a public homage, grateful to the God we adore, as that it is a means, for advancing his likeness in ourselves. For as our thoughts of God, are the seeds of virtue and goodness in us, we ought to form no other notion of him, but as of a being most wise, good, merciful, just, righteous, and infinite in all possible perfections. As for his nature, we know it not, nor those his attributes that are beyond our conceptions : We must therefore chiefly think of him as our pattern, and incessantly aspire to imitate his perfections ; but we must not form in our minds any gross notion of the nature of God. And we are to consider, that all worship is intended to raise devout thoughts of God still higher in our minds, and to make them return more frequently upon us ; as also to be a mean of exciting others, to the like apprehensions of God : But all these are of no use to us, unless they are the seeds of a new and spiritual life in us ; so that the only end of religious worship, with respect to ourselves and others, is the rooting deeper in our souls such impressions of God, as may produce in us a holy temper of mind, which is the spring of a virtuous and exemplary life.

Nor has the new testament less expressly assured us, that an ill course of life, is perfectly inconsistent with the hopes of salvation. It was necessary to set these hopes before all sinners, since nothing can so effectually animate and encourage men to begin a new life, as to let them see it is not too late to attempt it, and that their condition is not desperate. But for those who intend to continue in their sins, thinking they can purchase the favour of God, and obtain an indulgence to live in them, by means of some voluntary austerities, great endowments, or pomp and grandeur in the external parts of divine worship ; all these will be of no avail

in the sight of God, since *without holiness, we can never hope to see him.* There is but one way to heaven, and that is to live *soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world* *. Nor is it they who say, but he *that doth the will of our father which is in heaven, that shall enter into the kingdom of God.*

As for the other dispositions in the nature of man, that may engage those who govern, or lead the rest, to impose on and deceive their followers; this is expressly condemned in the gospel. Our saviour, the great pastor and bishop, came not to be *ministered unto, but to minister*; and he has by his example recommended humility, and lowliness of mind indeed, to all his followers, but more particularly to those, who undertake the care of mens souls; their ministry is a service, and not a dominion; his *kingdom is not of this world.* Their great business is to raise and exalt men above the regard of all outward things, and not to seek after the empire and wealth of the world. They ought to be examples to their flock, in all those virtues to which they exhort them. Indeed, they who *serve at the altar, ought to live of the altar, and to be highly esteemed for their works sake.* But as this is for their work sake, and not their own, they ought to consider these advantages, only as qualifying them to carry on that work with the better success. So that our blessed saviour has given us all the caution that was possible, against all such dispositions, as are in our nature to corrupt it; and these are so very express, that any church that intended to bring them in, must first persuade the world, either that the pastors of the church, were the infallible and only expounders of the scriptures, or that the people were not obliged to read them at all. In truth, who would be much concerned to read those books, about which they are not allowed to employ their
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* Heb. 12. 14. Tit. 2. 12. Mat. 7. 21.

Disc. I. *A general view of popery.*

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rational faculties. These writings being thus engrossed by the clergy, and the exposition of them being looked on as their prerogative, it was the more easy for them, to impose whatever opinions, they had a mind to obtrude on the world.

I proceed to examine, how far these practices suited the easiness and credulity of mankind. Men that have not elevated notions, are too apt to imagine the deity a being like themselves, and that he may be expressed by a bodily resemblance; as also that the government of the world, is a distracting care, which exceeds the capacity of any one being. Hence some fancied that there were many inferior Gods, who had all the concerns of this world under their care, every one having his province. Some had countries, towns, or villages; others had trades or professions, and some were for particular diseases or accidents; and to every one of these, divine adoration was paid. Images also were made for them, and by particular rites, they invoked that divine power, and affixed it to the image, believing the deities took satisfaction therein, and by which wonderful things might be done. This is the whole mystery of heathenish idolatry, to which the nature of bad men is so prone, that no wonder if such made advantage of it, and easily subdued the world to it: A great part of this was brought into the Christian religion, it being thought a prudent way of working on the heathens, to let them see they only changed their names, and some of the rites, but not the nature of their former idolatry. Kingdoms and towns, professions and trades, were supposed to be under the conduct of tutelar saints; to others all sorts of diseases, and the varieties of accidents were assigned; and tho' at first they only prayed to these for their intercession, yet afterwards, they directly prayed to them for

the pardon of sin, for divine grace, and admittance to heaven.

The daily prayer to the blessed virgin, who is applied to in the room of the mother of the heathen gods, is “*Mary, mother of grace, mother of*” “*mercy, do thou protect us from our enemy,*” “*and receive us in the hour of death.*” They pray on all saints day, that the angels, and arch-angels, may wash them from their sins, and confer on them the heavenly glory. In the office, called our lady, they pray, that she would ‘untie the bonds of the guilty, give light to the blind, drive away all evil, and ask all good things, and shew herself to be a mother.’ On the feasts of the apostles and evangelists, they thus address them; ‘you that shut heaven, and open it when you please, free us from the bonds of sin, heal us and restore us to the blessedness of virtue.’ It is needless to multiply more instances of this kind, which are innumerable. Hence it clearly appears, that divine honour and adoration is offered to the saints, and this makes them Gods. *St. Paul’s* definition of idolatry is, the worshipping those, *who by nature are not Gods* ||. If then, the asking pardon of sin and grace here, and eternal life hereafter from them, be not plainly giving divine honour, what is so? For they carry this matter much farther than a bare imploring their intercession, for they expect pardon, grace, and glory, upon their account, as appears from their prayer after absolution. “The passion of our lord Jesus Christ, the merits of the blessed virgin, and of all the saints, and all the good thou hast done, and the evil thou hast suffered, be to thee, for the remission of thy sins, the increase of grace, and the reward of eternal life.” And in public absolution they say, “by the prayers and merits of the blessed virgin mary, and of all the saints,

saints, may our Lord bring us to the kingdom of heaven." So much of this branch of idolatry.

Nor are they less guilty of representing God by outward figures and resemblances. They allow of images in their public offices for the trinity, besides innumerable ones for Christ and the saints. These are not only signs to remind them of the objects represented by the image, but they believe there is a particular virtue in them. They use forms for blessing their images, and for deriving a divine virtue to them; praying that the cross blessed by them, "may be the redemption of souls, a comfort and safeguard against the enemies darts, the establishment of faith, and the increase of good works; and that whoso worships before it, may find health both to soul and body." It would be endless to mention their consecration of images, and *agnus dei's*, their charms and conjurations over water, salt, oil, candles, bells, vessels, garments, and a thousand inventions, in which their prayers mention a virtue derived into the matter thus consecrated, for the health of body and soul, and for a remedy against temporal and spiritual evils; all which are such gross remainders of heathenism, that tho' the wiser among them are ashamed of these things, yet they are still continued in their public offices, and esteemed no small part of their religion by the common people. But of all charms, the most astonishing is, their making a God of a piece of bread, by only pronouncing a few words, and which is carried about and adored with the same veneration, that is offered up to the great God. And as these things are set off with great magnificence, and all that pomp which can work on the outward senses; no wonder if the ignorant part of mankind has been so wrought on by them, as that a plain and pure religion, unadorned with these gaudy things, was despised by those, who

only measured the value of things, by the impressions which they made on their sensitive powers.

A religion that proposes another way to heaven, besides that of true holiness, was well calculated for the greater part of men, who would rather forego their hopes of what they think uncertain, than restrain their appetites in the present enjoyment, of what they call pleasure or profit. What could be more grateful to such persons, than priestly absolution, and the certain virtue of the sacraments, to all who have attrition for their sins, which is a degree of sorrow, that scarce any man can be so impious as to throw off? What could be more agreeable than the purchasing the pardon of sin, by the endowments they made to churches? What more acceptable, than to redeem the punishment due for sins, by pilgrimages, or some slight devotions; by going to some pretended holy war, or buying indulgencies for money? What could make a sinner more easy in his sins, than the hopes, that by dying in the habit of an order held sacred, all the merits of that order were to be communicated to him? or, at the worst, it was only to leave somewhat to the church for such a number of masses, as would soon infallibly redeem him out of purgatory. The common and approved practice of confessors in giving hasty absolution, and then enjoining penance, is the most direct way to clear mens minds of any deep sense they might have to lead a holy and strict life. It is true, they have among them men of very exemplary lives, and which they all agree is the surest way to heaven; but they take great care, that those who will not submit to such rules, should not be left without comfort, and become desperate. In short, the methods they generally prescribe to the greatest part of men, consist of things so inconsiderable and contemptible, that whoever well considers them, must be induced to think very meanly

meanly of God, of heaven, and religion : If God is to be pleased, heaven to be attained, and religion to be placed in such things. For who can have any great reverence for the Christian religion, that sees it in no other light, than in what papists represent it. Having thus considered how far these corruptions tended to bias the nature of man, in concerns of religion ; I will now enquire, whether the same corruptions do not carry in them visible characters of interest and base ends, in those who inculcate them ; especially if we consider, that the foundation of all this, is the exalting the church's authority, that is, of the priests themselves, and raising the pope's authority, on whom they all depend.

The pope's power of dispensing with the laws of the church, and granting indulgencies, were sure engines to raise his empire high, as soon as it was known. His authority over all churchmen, and their exemption from the cognizance of secular courts, were excellent methods to engage many, to maintain his empire with courage, and without danger. The priests power of absolving sins, of miraculously turning a piece of bread into a God, and of delivering souls out of purgatory, are things that must needs raise their esteem higher, than what any priests ever yet pretended to. It is no wonder therefore, if men pay a blind submission to priests, whose character is so strangely magnified, and who can do such amazing things : For no authority is so absolute, as what commands the consciences and thoughts of men ; nor can any thing give so easy an access to this empire, as the entering into all mens secrets, their having, as is believed, power to pardon their sins, and to give them those sacraments, which they say will certainly put them in a state of grace. What then was wanting to lay secure foundations, for a dominion which could do

so much, both in this life and the next, that was not practised in the church of *Rome*? And if all these things are not now believed in all the churches of that communion, they must thank our reformation for this, it being the universally received doctrine before then, and is still in force where there are no protestants suffered to live. But if for the sins of the reformed churches, God ever permits them to be laid in the dust, then all these things will be revived with great pomp. For no disuse or prescription will be a bar against what has been once received as divine traditions: It will be said, the church did but prudently wave her rights, and which will be again insisted on when in her power.

Another temptation that makes men prone to deceive, is a desire of wealth; as well as power; the great instrument by which any pleasure is to be procured. I need not mention what real treasures, the imaginary treasure of the church of *Rome* has brought to that see, nor how rich a mine *purgatory* has proved to it. When the world was made to believe, that at least the temporary, if not the eternal punishment of sins was to be bought off by endowments and gifts; no wonder if the richer sort were easily persuaded to make their heirs poor, by paying for such a number of masses, as would secure their salvation in the next state. To so great a profusion did this grow, that even in ages of ignorance, laws were made, to restrain the unmeasured donations which were extorted from weak and superstitious people: Nor need I mention the prices fixed upon indulgencies, nor the rates of sins. Licences to break all the laws of the church are to be purchased, and the compositions are known.

— Thus it appears, the corruptions of the church of *Rome* are such, that as the clergy were easily engaged in a conspiracy to advance them; so
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were they also very well calculated, for the weakness and corruption of human nature; especially when interest enters into the argument: for that ties men fast, and makes them hear whatever is against their profit, with so much prejudice, that no wonder if errors so powerfully supported, are stidly maintained.

I shall now add a few reflections, on the methods made use of to propagate these opinions. The ways of God are truth and mercy: and as the obligations to truth is an eternal duty, which must for ever bind men of all religions, so sincerity and candour is particularly recommended to us christians, both by the practice of our saviour, who was the *true and faithful witness*, in whose mouth *was no guile*; and by his doctrine, which teaches the strictest sincerity possible, and recommends a life of faith and confidence in God, as the most eminent virtue of the christian religion. And with respect to love and charity, as our saviour was the greatest pattern of doing good for evil, both in life and death, so he carried the precept higher than any religion ever did. Love is the badge of christianity, and when once this holy religion spreads its influence into the soul, it not only becomes so inwardly mollified, into that tenderness and compassion, as to make all such sincerely love those who are truly good; but it also begets in them great piety, and a merciful disposition, even towards enemies, or those who are in error: all cruelty and sourness of temper, the great engines and instruments to support all false religions, is so softened and mitigated, that *St. Paul*, who was a fierce persecutor, while he was a zealous *Jew*, became a wonderful instance of gentleness, when this spirit of Christ was formed in him; a true christian is peaceable, mild, and easy to be entreated. Piety towards God, and holiness of life, are to be found

in other religions ; but an universal charity and brotherly kindness, are peculiar to our most holy faith ; so that as far as any church, or sort of men depart from the rules of truth and goodness, so far they fall from the spirit of Christ, and bear the character of the lapsed, apostate spirit, who was a liar, and a murderer from the beginning. Hence may every one make a judgment of the spirit, that moves and appears in the conduct of any church, whether it be a spirit of truth and goodness, or of falshood and cruelty ; the former is the spirit of Christ, the latter must be the spirit of the devil, and of antichrist.

To apply what has been said to the church of *Rome*. What methods of imposture have they not used ? False visions, lying wonders, and absurd legends, were for some ages almost the only subjects of their sermons ; from whence most of the lessons in their breviary are composed. By these, were purgatory and the virtue of masses, the credit of image worship, and devotion to the saints, and transubstantiation established and advanced. By forged writings, the belief of the pope's power, and almost all the other chief points of that religion, were first infused into the minds of men ; which forgeries, though for some ages they passed as genuine, are now apparently discovered. They are confessed by themselves, to have been the pious frauds of former ages. To this I may add, the pope's power of dispensing with oaths, vows, and the treaties of princes ; in particular their decreeing, that faith was not to be kept with heretics ; as also, that of equivocation and reservation, so openly taught and practised among them. Their want of charity and mercy is as much conspicuous, as their want of truth. They have decreed it in general councils, that all heretics ought to be extirpated ; and that such princes as do not this, should be deposed, and
their

their subjects dissolved from their oaths of allegiance. The *Albigenses* in *France* severely felt the violent effects of these cruel decrees, being condemned as heretics, for not submitting to all the superstitions then received. The popish historians themselves relate, that sixty thousand having shut themselves within the town of *Besiers*, orders came from the pope's legate, who commanded the army, to kill all without mercy; nay, he would not even spare many good catholics in the town, but said, kill all, God knows them that are his.

What their mercies were in the last age, most all the nations of *Europe* saw. To be burnt at a stake after many previous cruel tortures, was all that condemned heretics could expect from them; and so it will be wherever that religion prevails. This is an evident indication, that they are actuated by a spirit directly contrary to that of Christ; indeed, contrary to that common humanity, to that mercifulness which God has planted in the nature of man; so that it is a clear evidence of a very ill religion, when men by its influences become really worse, and more fiercely brutal, than if they were not under the restraint and government of any religion at all. And what can be a more manifest proof of an ill religion, than this? But I am sorry to find, that too many among us, are also deeply tinctured with the same cruel spirit. It is true, this is a personal fault, for no part of our doctrine gives it any countenance or encouragement; on the contrary, to hate any man, to rejoice in executions, to insult or use ill any that are in misery, or to endeavour their ruin because of their religion, are all such symptoms of a popish and persecuting spirit, that it is our shame not to leave these things entirely to them. We ought to pity the seduced or mistaken, and endeavour to reclaim them by reason, and the force of truth, by our gentleness and
tender-

tenderness towards them ; this is most agreeable, to that just and merciful religion we profess.

Let us then seriously reflect on all the advantages, which we who are educated in the purity of our holy religion, do enjoy. We worship God in a way most suitable to the divine nature, and most agreeable to our own. We worship God as a spirit, pure, holy, good and wise. We do not defile those glorious ideas of his perfections, by any sensible representations of him ; and as we worship only one God, so we address him, only by one mediator. We have no charms nor superstitious rights ; and only retain those two sacraments which Christ instituted, in the same simplicity, as they were at first appointed ; and as to a few ceremonies, we use them only as decent expressions of our own duty. We are also taught by the new testament, that all religion will be unprofitable, unless it tends to sanctify our natures, and to govern us in the course of our lives ; so that unless we be truly holy, our religion will stand us in no stead : nor do our clergy pretend to any other authority, but that of preaching the gospel, administering the sacraments, and watching over the souls committed to their care, as becomes those who are to give an account of them ; our church pretends to no infallibility, nor any absolute empire. The authority that is assumed in rites and ceremonies, is only in things indifferent, which are the proper objects of human authority. For the power of determining points of religion, is subordinate to the scripture.

A religion then so free of base interest, or gross corruption, bears clear characters of that truly apostolical religion, which was delivered to the world, by the disciples and apostles of Christ ; such a doctrine wants not the supports either of fraudulent, or cruel methods. We may be as *sheep*

in the midst of wolves ; and if it be then necessary for us, *to be wise as serpents*, yet we must still remember, to be as *innocent as doves*. There is only one, and that the *main* thing which we want, namely, the true spirit of Christ, to animate us in the practice of his religion ; without which it is dead, even as the *body is dead without the soul*, that quickens it. What can all notions and opinions however true, all forms and customs however harmless or useful they be, avail us, without such an internal sense of religion, as subdues and reforms our natures, and governs us in the course of our lives. All the rest will signify nothing, but to aggravate our condemnation, for that having known our master's will, we have not done it. This of all things is most likely to provoke God to give us up to the tyranny of that cruel religion ; for though God is long suffering, slow to wrath, and unwilling to deliver us up, to those who are both his and our enemies, yet if we continue still to provoke him by our wicked lives, all our pretended zeal for this holy religion, will only tend to precipitate our ruin. If then we would preserve the purity of our faith and worship, let us walk worthy of it ; for thereby shall we most signally express our thankful acknowledgments of God's goodness to us, in blessing us, with all these spiritual blessings in Christ.

DISCOURSE II. Bp. Gibson.

The danger and mischief of popery.

Hosea 7. 9.

Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not, yea gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not.

THE prophet in this chapter, is speaking of the miserable condition to which the children of *Ephraim* had reduced themselves, by mixing with the heathen nations. He complains, that *Ephraim* had *mixed himself among the Egyptians and Assyrians*, who were charged with *making images and idols*, with *asking counsel at their flocks*, and with making *altars to sin* *. They had indeed enticed many of the *Israelites* to join in their idolatries; the mischief whereof was, that these strangers had devoured their strength, while they continued unanimous in the worship of the true God. The prophet not only fore-told, but lived to see the terrible effects of this their indulgence to idolatry, and neglect of God's worship. By encouraging the idolatrous nations to the prejudice of the true religion, they had provoked God's anger against them; and by suffering those nations to seduce so many of the *Israelites* to idolatry, they had exceedingly impaired their own strength; and being thus ripe for destruction, the king of *Assyria*, the rod of God's anger, found them an easy prey, and carrying them
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* *Hos. 4. 12. 8. 11. 13. 2.*

into captivity, placed his own people in their stead.

Without drawing a parallel between the kingdom of *Israel* with regard to *pagan* idolaters, and these kingdoms with respect to *popish* idolaters, yet thus much is certain; that there is a people among us, whom we justly charge with idolatry; that the liberties they have taken for many years past, have much exceeded the bounds which our constitution allows; that the exercise of their religion has been carried on with much greater boldness and openness than our laws permit; that the confidence of the priests in attempting to seduce the protestant subjects of this realm, has been beyond the example of former times; and that presuming upon the lenity and tenderness of the government, they have actually perverted many unwary, ignorant people. By these arts and methods too little observed and attended to by some, have strangers been suffered to corrupt our people, and devour our strength; for in no other light than that of strangers, does our constitution allow us to consider papists and popery; strangers to us in religion, in government, in interest and design.

They are strangers to us in religion, by their idolatries and innovations; by their perverting the holy scriptures, and raising their own traditions to an equal authority, they have exceedingly corrupted the faith and doctrine of the gospel. Their worship is burdened with a vast variety of superstitious rights, in which the true spirit of devotion is quite lost; they have changed the substance for the shadow, and will have it a worship in the letter, and not in the spirit; their discipline is wholly exercised by emissaries from *Rome*, set up in opposition to the spiritual governors of our church, and acting under the immediate direction and authority of a foreign head. And because the church of
England,

England, has purged herself from these idolatries, superstitions and innovations, and rejecting their tradition has made the scripture the rule of her faith, and accommodated her worship to the word of God and to the true ends of devotion, and delivered herself from the insupportable tyranny of the papal chair; therefore, and by this means are we esteemed heretics and schismatics by the church of *Rome*; and as such the sentence of excommunication is yearly denounced against us by the pope, and our destruction is declared to be a meritorious work. And by the bloody inquisition in some popish countries, and the terrible persecution upon the protestants in a neighbouring nation, and the swift approaches to the same cruelty at home, we may see what we are to expect, when that spirit can shew itself with safety, under the influence of a popish prince.

Far be it from us, to make this merciless treatment of our brethren a rule of our carriage and behaviour to them. We have not so learned Christ, as to think fire and faggot a fit application to the consciences of christians, or that burning their bodies is a proper means to save their souls. But these cruelties towards protestants in other nations, should methinks make the papists in our own, somewhat more modest and cautious, at least for them not to take new and unusual liberties; and we ought to be jealous of the growth of that religion among ourselves, which in other countries can animate the professors of it, to such inhuman barbarities towards our protestant brethren.

The papists are also strangers to us in government! princes can have no reliance on the members of the church of *Rome*, while they own a superior head, who claims a power of absolving subjects from their allegiance, and even degrading and excommunicating the sovereign. And as this pretended authority is chiefly exerted by the *Pope* against protestant

tant princes, so are their people prepared to receive, approve, and execute his sentences by another wicked doctrine, that no faith is to be kept with heretics ; and to what seditious and cruel attempts, these principles have led some of that church, none can be ignorant of, who have read the history of these kingdoms, since the beginning of queen *Elizabeth's* reign. And though it may be hoped, that many of our *English* Papists, who by being born and bred in the same air, and receiving their protection from the established laws, may have so good a share of tenderness and gratitude, as to abhor these cruelties of the *Romish* emissaries ; yet it is to be feared, that there will be a number at all times, desperate enough, to undertake such enterprizes, as are agreeable to the principles of that church, and which shall be judged by their infallible guide, to be a seasonable service to the common cause. And we may well suppose, that such dispositions are the more strong and numerous, when the whole body of our papists disown the title of our legal prince, in favour of a pretender of their own religion.

It is far from the temper of the *English*, and the nature of our constitution, to make men suffer upon bare presumptions ; but then the regard we owe to ourselves, and our constitution, calls upon us to be very watchful, when we are sure there is an enemy in our own bowels. When we find such a spirit moving among us, it behoves us to observe narrowly which way it moves, and to what degrees ; that it may be kept under such restraints, as the safety of church and state shall require. Their principles in effect declare, and we are all abundantly convinced, that whatever strength they have, will upon a fair opportunity be employed against us ; and therefore it nearly concerns us, to know the extent of their power, and to be jealous of its increase. It is the voice of the nation that we have no present or future security

security under God, but in the prosperity of his majesty, and the succession in the protestant line. And how then can we answer it to ourselves, to our posterity, or religion, if we make it not our utmost care, that they who we are sure have it in their will, have it not also in their power to shake or undermine these foundations of our safety.

And as papists are strangers to us, in religion and government, so are they in interest and design; for the spirit of that religion, is not wont to lie still without designs, much less to neglect any fair opportunities of serving them; and it were happy for the nation, and for themselves too, if their known principles in government and religion, were the only testimony of their designs. But this is a happiness not to be hoped for, while their priests are so open and bare faced, in making proselytes of the weaker sort, in rejoicing at the misfortunes of the kingdom, and repining at any public prosperity and success, with such freedom and openness, as few other nations would bear. Nay, instead of guarding against suspicions, and a prudent care not to give offence or jealousy, as might well be expected from them; too many seem to be trying to what degrees of provocation the government will bear: As these practices are we hope condemned by the more prudent and modest part of that persuasion, who must think it reasonable that the established constitution should provide for its own safety; so if that provision happens to bring inconveniences on them, they must lay the blame where it ought to rest, namely upon the intemperate zeal of the emissaries of *Rome*, and of others whom they have excited to these provoking measures.

The consequence of this opposition to our religion and government, and to the established constitution in church and state, is, that what they gain,
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we lose ; whatever new strength or spirits we suffer them to get, are all drained out of our own body ; every profelyte they make, immediately becomes our professed enemy, both in religion and policy ; lifting himself at the same time, under two foreign heads, one in the church, and the other in the state ; and it is generally observed, that such converts are more remarkably active and furious in the cause they have espoused ; whether it is, that fickle heads are naturally fond of new things, or that they think it for their honour, to make a shew of a thorough conviction. And as every convert to popery, becomes immediately a zealot for a popish prince ; so it is to be feared, at this juncture, that the zeal of some of our own church for the pretended prince of that religion, proves the occasion of making themselves profelytes to the religion itself. A community of measures and wishes, in the affairs of state, naturally draws on a correspondence and good liking between them, and the members of the church of *Rome* ; and the respect which they find from papists, by degrees wears off the abhorrence of popery ; by which means the missionaries of that church, who never neglect opportunities, find an easy access, and the work half done to their hands ; nay, a very learned non-juror* has publickly warned the nation of the boldness and success of the priests making converts, and tells us from his own observations, the arts and methods by which they carry on their work, and laments, *that the growth of popery among us should be greater than formerly, notwithstanding the increase of penal laws.*

Indeed those penal laws are so much softened, or rather laid aside by the *English* clemency and good nature, that it has been the wish of wise and considering men, to see fewer laws, and they more ef-

* *Hickes's* preface to his conference.

effectually executed. They have laid so long under the terror of penal laws, and found so little inconvenience in them, as scarce to believe the legislature is in earnest. And yet these very laws perhaps give a handle to evil-minded men abroad to enlarge upon the sufferings of their *English* brethren; so that while we in great tenderness are suspending our laws at home, we are reproached abroad as the most cruel persecutors. This is but an ill return for the great indulgence their brethren find among us; which should oblige both priests and people, at least to do justice to the church of *England*, by confessing that as the laws complained of were first made upon some remarkable attempts of papists against our constitution in church and state; so nothing but fresh provocations of the same kind have driven the *English* to the execution of them. They know that in some countries it is criminal to be a protestant, and that the most peaceable behaviour is no protection; and they as well know, that it has not been the papist as such, but only the provoking, seditious and turbulent papist, who has found any disturbance from the *English* government. To come to particulars.

In the infancy of the reformation under *Henry VIII.* the great work was to extirpate the authority of the *pope*, and establish the supremacy of the prince, and it is well known, that the disaffection of that king to the main doctrines of popery, was not so great, as to reduce him to any remarkable hardships towards those, who would at least be silent under his own supremacy. *Edward VI.* went farther, and established an *uniformity of service, and administration of the sacraments throughout the realm*; but that law only enjoined the minister to use this, and not the mass book; and the people not to interrupt the minister, or speak against the service; and when it appeared that the missals were a great
obstruction

obstruction to the intended uniformity, they were only called in, to give a more free and easy passage to the established service; without disturbing either priest or people in the *private* exercise of their religion.

Notwithstanding the bloody reign of queen *Mary*, so far was her successor, the glorious queen *Elizabeth*, from the least disposition to cruelty, that she was contented to restore the supremacy and the public service to their former state; allowing papists a share in her counsels; and in a subsequent * law against the pope's authority, exempting peers of the realm from the disabling oath, and frequently declaring, that no subject, who would live quietly and peaceably, should be disturbed on the account of religion. Indeed, the laws afterwards grew more severe, because the papists grew more seditious †. To execute bulls of absolution and reconciliation from *Rome*, or to receive absolution and reconciliation in virtue of such bulls, was made high-treason. But let the history of the three preceding years explain that law, and determine, whether it was owing to the severity of protestants, or the sedition of papists. We read ‡ that the pope authorized *Saunders* and others, to absolve all the *English* who would return to the church of *Rome*, and that they were very zealous in the work. That the same pope sent his bull into *England* by *Merton* the priest ||, to anathematize the queen, deprive her of the throne, and absolve her subjects from the oath of allegiance; that thereby many of the people withdrew their obedience, a dangerous rebellion was raised, circular letters were sent to the papists to rise and assist in the cause, and the bull itself was published in the city, in an open and insolent manner †.

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* 5 *Eliz.* c. 1. † 13 *Eliz.* c. 1. ‡ *Camb.* anno 1568. || 1569. † 1569.

Ten years after the law against bulls was reinforced, the priests having found new devices to evade the former law, and to carry on the work of absolving and reconciling by other methods. There were also penalties for saying and hearing of mass, great numbers of priests being sent into *England* and *Ireland* from the seminaries abroad, under pretence of preaching and administering the sacraments, but in fact to withdraw the queen's subjects from their obedience. The same law lays a penalty upon persons that are absent a year from church, who are to give sureties for their behaviour; which was not unreasonable, as the emissaries of the church of *Rome*, under whom such absenters lived, were the professed teachers of rebellion, and that a design had been detected between the *Spanish* king and pope to dethrone the queen, and restore popery *. The next law against papists, was for all jesuits, seminary priests, and others to depart the realm. But read the history of that time, and you will find great numbers of priests coming daily into *England*, who taught that the queen was no queen, and that her authority ceased ever since the bull of pope *Pius*. The same law forbids the sending of children, or contributions to the seminaries abroad; and *Cambden* assures us, that great numbers of children were sent over to those seminaries, and received there on condition, that they first made a vow to return, when they were instructed in their learning and discipline, that is, in the rankest principles of sedition and rebellion; and while they were thus diligent in corrupting the nation, we need not wonder, that the great council of the land should oblige all who were thus guilty, to abjure the realm. Therefore another law was made to banish papists from court †, and confine them to their own dwelling; and

* 1578.

† 35 *Eliz.* c. 2.

and our histories will explain it, by shewing that in a very few years, several designs had been formed and carried on to assassinate the queen*.

King *James I.* began his reign with a revival of the laws against popery; and with just reason, considering the many wicked designs against the person and government of his predecessor, and that they had publicly disputed his title to succeed. Three years after, papists were confined to their places of abode, and greater rewards offered for discovering of priests, and express declarations required against the pope's authority to depose princes and absolve subjects from their obedience, and against dispensing with oaths, and taking them with equivocations and mental reservations. But then, all this was done upon the discovery of the most hellish and execrable plot, that we read of in any age or nation, the gun-powder treason; which was carried on by the priests to the point of execution. To these restraints were added in the reign of *Charles II.* the sacramental test, and the exclusion of the papists out of the great council of the land; and king *James II.* when he came to the throne, did abundantly justify the wisdom of our legislators, by making the removal of that test, one of his first endeavours for establishing of popery. And thus by comparing the seditious practices of the papists, as recorded in our histories, with the several laws they have occasioned; it clearly appears, that the papists have been the sole authors of their own misfortunes; that these restraints were brought upon them by rebellion, and not by religion, as they pretend; that the *English* legislature have gradually proceeded in their restraints, as the repeated attempts of the *papists* upon the persons and government of our princes, have rendered them necessary; and that nothing can extort a sanguinary law from
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* *Camben.* anno 1584, 1585, 1586, 1587.

the *English* temper, but an indispensable regard to their own religion and government.

And whatever severity may be pretended in the laws, it is very certain there is none in the execution. And he who considers how strict the laws, and how severe the penalties are, who attempts to pervert any one to popery, or says mass, or is even found in the realm; and against those who shall harbour a priest in their houses, or send children or money to a seminary abroad; and observes how common and familiar they are among us, will see how little the papists fear these terrible laws they complain off, and how much they are indebted to the goodness and tenderness of the *English* government. But they must not hope that our goodness will bear all provocations. The laws will rouse themselves, when papists make use of such unprecedented freedom and boldness as we have seen in our days. It is against the law to import popish books from abroad; but we have seen them printed, published, and dispersed over the nation, with the greatest industry. They are strictly forbidden to send children to the seminaries abroad, but now we can see them establishing of seminaries at home with impunity. These are growing evils, and require some effectual remedy to be applied; and as long as the *Romish* priests are thus busy and active in their work, it behoves the ministers of a protestant church, to lay to heart the visible increase of popery, and to warn the people of the danger, that so we may raise in them an equal zeal and concern for the true protestant religion established among us.

For if ever popery returns in this land with power, we must look upon it as the judgment of God, for the sins of our nation; and therefore it concerns us to enquire betimes, what are the most effectual means to remove the guilt and avert the punishment which we most justly deserve; especially in
times

times of public danger, when we see God's judgments hanging over our heads ; and in this enquiry, we can have no surer guide, than the various instances of God's dealing with kingdoms and nations, in the way both of judgment and mercy, as they are represented in the holy scriptures. Thus we read of the threatning of God against a sinful and disobedient people ; with declarations of what they were to expect, if they did not repent and reform. *Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee, lest I make thee desolate, a land not inhabited* *. *Because ye have done all these works, I spake unto you, but you heard not, I called upon you, but ye answered not,——therefore I will cast you out of my sight* †. And when St. Paul enumerates the judgments of God upon the *Israelites*, for their provocations in the wilderness ; he presses those examples upon the *Corinthians*, in order to deter them from the like crimes. *These things were for our examples, that we should not lust after evil things ; as they also lusted ; for they happened unto them for ensamples, and are written for our admonition* ‡.

It is our saviour's message to the church of *Ephesus* by St. *John*, to remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works ; or else I will come quickly, and remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent || ; that is, I will take from thee the clear light of the gospel, which thou hast enjoyed. And does it not nearly concern the people of this land, seriously to consider, the unhappiness and misery of having the light of the scriptures taken from them, (as they must be, when they are in a language that people do not understand) and themselves left to be guided by the traditions of men, instead of the commandments of God ; and are further required, upon pain of dam-

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nation,

* Jerem. 6. 8.

† Jerem. 7. 13. 15.

‡ 1 Cor. 10. 6, 11.

|| Rev. 2. 5.

nation, to embrace traditional doctrines, which have no authority from scripture, our only true rule, but have a direct tendency to poison, and eat out the very vitals of christianity. Let us then seriously consider how terrible such a judgment would be, and always remember what our saviour tells the church of *Ephesus*, as the only means of preventing and escaping it, namely, *except ye repent*.

And for our encouragement, to take that sure method of being delivered from judgments temporal or spiritual, let us also remember the gracious declarations, which God made to his people, by the same prophet that denounced his judgments. *At what instant*, says God, *I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down and destroy it. If that nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil I thought to do unto them* * ; which readiness in God to spare and deliver, upon repentance and reformation, is most remarkably exemplified in his dealing with the *Ninevites*. The prophet *Jonah* was sent to them with this message, yet *forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown*; and then it follows, *so the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them, even to the least of them, and God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said, that he would do unto them, and he did it not* †. Thus hath God set before us life and death, blessing and cursing; and God grant that we may know, at least in this our day, the things which belong unto our peace, before they be hid from our eyes.

* Jer. 18. 7, 8. † Jonah 3. 4, 5, 10.

DISCOURSE III. *Balguy.*

The causes and fatal consequences of a darkened and depraved mind.

Mat. 6. 23.

If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness.

IN the verse before the text, according to a figure of speech common both to sacred and prophane writers, we find a power and disposition of mind, represented and illustrated, the one by a bodily organ, the other by a corporeal affection. *The light of the body is the eye; if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light:* transferring this to the mind, we are to enquire what the word *single* in this place means. The primary, direct, and most natural signification of a *single eye*, in relation to the mind, seems to be that purity, integrity, and simplicity of judgment, which consists in being solely directed and governed by evidence, without regard had to any other consideration. The sight of the mind is then properly *single*, when on the examination of any question, it judges according to evidence, without being influenced by any other motives. On the contrary, an *evil eye* is one that is distempered and depraved; and when spoken of the mind, denotes an understanding clouded with prejudices, and a judgment disordered by sinister views, and irregular influences. By these explications, the meaning of the text becomes plain and obvious. If reason or understand-

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ing, which is the eye of the mind, and the light of the soul, be vitiated by prejudice, and blinded by partiality; the consequence is darkness to a high degree, instead of light; such as fills the mind with errors and absurdities, disorder and confusion. *If the light which be in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness?* I shall endeavour to shew from these words, how and by what means the mind of man is thus darkened and depraved; and also the degrees and extent of this mischief, implied in the question, *how great is that darkness?*

Though it may be truly observed, that the general causes of this mischief, are prejudice, partiality, and prepossession, yet the grounds and occasions of men's prejudices are both numerous and various; but the principal of them may be reduced to the following heads: constitution, custom, authority, singularity, affectation, interest. As these seem to be the chief sources of prejudice, and the main occasions of partial and corrupt judgment, it may not be improper briefly to enquire into and examine them.

That mens judgments are apt to be influenced by their respective *constitutions*, is not to be wondered at, there being such an intimate union between soul and body, that the operations of the former greatly depend on the latter; not only as to its accidental state, but its original frame. Differences of constitution, unless great care be taken, will remarkably affect the understanding. For instance; a cool, phlegmatic habit, naturally disposes men to be diffident and timorous; to diminish all evidence, suspect all arguments, and represent them to disadvantage: a sanguine constitution frequently occasions rash opinions, and presumptuous conclusions; makes men impatient of attention, and by consequence precipitates their judgments: a copious flow of spirits is apt to magnify evidence, makes

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men take things for granted without proof, or when offered, too easily to admit of it; and this inconvenience is much aggravated, where the constitution happens to be both choleric and sanguine. For anger, when it prevails, disturbs and darkens the mind, obstructs and confounds the intellectual powers; a man may as well see objects distinctly in a hurricane, as judge impartially in a storm of passion. In this case, men, so far from using their understandings in a regular way, that for the time, reason appears impertinent, and truth contemptible: and though these constitutional inclinations are really natural, yet the mischiefs thence arising, are solely chargeable on ourselves. If we guard and govern them as we ought to do, they cannot lead us into error; but if we give the rein to our passions, no wonder if they run away with us. Few men are born slaves to their constitution; and whoever makes himself such, the blame certainly lies at his own door. He may act wisely and judge honestly, if he carefully makes use of the means God has afforded him.

Indeed, *custom*, another source of error, is a principle that hath great force to warp mens minds, and fix a bias on their understandings; when any set of opinions, maxims, or conclusions have long possessed the mind, and taken root in it; they are seldom removed without great difficulty. We are to consider and treat them with tenderness and respect; and whatever is advanced in opposition thereto, though, perhaps, an evident truth, is commonly rejected without examination. Hence many absurdities plead a kind of prescription, and old errors are preferred to new truths. This is more remarkably the case, in respect of such opinions and sentiments, as we imbibe in our childhood; they making then a deeper and more durable impression. Hence it is that the prejudices of educa-

tion are so hardly and seldom conquered ; indeed, never without great attention, strong resolution, and a vigorous effort of mind. It is almost needless to observe, what powerful obstacles these are to the improvement of the understanding. The seeds of sound knowledge and instruction are sensibly choaked by them ; and till the mind be carefully weeded, it seldom, if ever, produces any valuable fruit. By these prejudices, all truth are obstructed, and their mischievous influence extends both to the precepts of philosophy, and the principles of religion, as well as the maxims of life ; none of which can be fairly examined, till such prevailing prejudices be in some measure subdued. Instead of considering any points as they are in themselves, and searching for evidence with singleness and simplicity of mind ; our usual method is to compare them with such old notions and received opinions, as lie before us. If they agree with these, it is well, if not, we immediately suspect them, and think them not worth our attention. Indeed, one truth cannot be repugnant to another ; but our great fault is, that whatever our minds have for some time embraced, we are apt to consider as a stock of neat truth, without the least mixture of error. The consequence of which is, that whatever squares not therewith, we look upon as erroneous and absurd ; so that while few truths gain admittance, errors continually encrease and multiply. For if we are governed by custom, instead of evidence, this manifestly tends to darken mens minds, and deprave their judgments.

Another prejudice nearly allied to this, is *authority* ; or an undue deference and attachment to great names and venerable characters, meerly as such. Instead of enquiring after evidence, and examining the merits of any cause, men are apt to take things upon trust, and blindly to follow the senti-

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sentiments of their superiors, or the principles of their ancestors. The rejection of our saviour by the *Jews* was entirely founded on this. *Have any, say they, of the rulers, or Pharisees believed on him?* They thought it needless to examine his credentials, or search for evidence. It was sufficient for them, if he was opposed by those who guided their judgments, and governed their consciences; and yet the men in which they confided, were entirely influenced by their prejudices and passions. Thus the *blind led the blind*, and the love of darkness generally prevails.

Though christianity utterly discountenances, and expressly condemns implicit faith, yet many of its professors have been strangely drawn into it, to the dishonour of their religion, and the disgrace of human understanding, so that they have sat in darkness from age to age. It is too common, for men of all sects and parties strictly to adhere to the principles and persuasions of their forefathers, even at the expence of reason and religion; whatever opinion, religion, or communion is embraced by us at first, we most frequently persist in the same; as if it was part of our inheritance. Indeed, we should never change without good grounds; but if we can give no better reason for our being christians or protestants, or members of any communion, than that our fathers were so before us, our religion must be poorly founded. The same reason may be given by *Papists, Jews, Mahometans, and Pagans*; and if it be a bad reason in them, as it certainly is, it can never be a good one in us. But the fact is visible and notorious, however absurd it be. Instead of keeping the eye of our minds clear and single, we often shut it, and blindly follow our leaders. But such a practice is unchristian and unmanly, and naturally tends to the corruption of religion, and the depravation of reason;

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for both these require that men should consider and judge for themselves, and when they have *tried and proved things* as well as they can, then to chuse and *hold fast that which is good*; so that authority not only perverts mens judgments, but renders them useless. It not only darkens the mind, but tends to perpetuate that darkness. Men by judging for themselves, and according to evidence, greatly improve their minds, and strengthen their faculties, promote truth, and preserve liberty; but a servile resignation to authority is void of all merit, and fruitful of all mischief. It cramps mens talents, disables their understandings, and in the room of a rational assent, introduces a blind faith, and a stupid mind. It directly tends to the promotion and establishment of ignorance, darkness, slavery and superstition.

I proceed to consider the opposite extreme, I mean, a vain affectation of *singularity*, which is another enemy to sound judgment, and a great obstruction to light and truth. If some men are too easy to be led, others are as desirous to lead; aiming not at truth, but at glory and distinction; while the one loves to follow the multitude in beaten roads, the others are industrious to find out new ways, and by-paths of their own. But why should any man wish to distinguish himself at the expence of reason and truth? Is not this as much prejudice as the former? If authority shuts mens eyes, will not vanity make them see double? In the one case, they neglect their faculties; in the other, they abuse and pervert them. Indeed, ignorance and darkness are the natural effect of both; and would we really come to the knowledge of truth, it is evidence alone that we must regard. It is not to the purpose, how many are for, or against any point; for numbers will neither prove, nor disprove a thing; when truth and reason are on one side.

side of a question, and popular opinion of another; singularity is wisdom and worth; but on any other supposition, weakness and folly. For it tends to darken the mind, and deprave the judgment, by drawing them aside with a false bias in their pursuits and enquiries. Instead of regarding nothing but the evidence of truth, they are influenced by other motives, which present things in a deceitful light. Hence singular notions are encouraged, and the real evidence of things, is artfully concealed.

Another source of prejudice is *inclination*, or affection; or the contrary, dislike and disaffection; when one side of a question pleases, and the other displeases, how difficult is it to be impartial? When the evidence is defective on the agreeable side, how ready are we to supply it by our imaginations? Bare possibilities we can magnify into probabilities, and these into certainties; nay, palpable errors and absurdities, shall be dressed up into the appearance of specious and plausible truths; and so when any point is disagreeable to our humours and inclinations, and which we would not have true, all means are used to represent it as an error. Thus for instance, when a man is deeply engaged in a vicious course of life, and strongly devoted to his lusts and passions; how difficult is it, to bring him to a fair judgment of his own case? Represent to him the destructive nature of vice both to soul and body; make it plainly appear, that sin is the greatest folly, and guilt the mother of misery; and what will be the effect of all this? Why, he will see and hear in his own way. He will endeavour to persuade himself, that it is all fallacy and fiction; that his course of life is pleasant, and that the terrors of futurity are meer bugbears. This he hopes and wishes, and for want of other evidence, he converts these desires into proofs and probabilities. He will palliate the deformities of sin and vice, and

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give them fair names; licentiousness he will call liberty; prodigality, generosity; and luxury, politeness; all kinds of immorality shall be softened into gallantry, or greatness of spirit. On the other hand, wisdom and virtue, though amiable in themselves, yet being disagreeable to him, shall equally be miscalled and misrepresented. Religion shall be deemed superstition; piety, hypocrisy; strict morals, preciseness, or pedantry. Thus the plain nature of things are confounded, and lost in a mist of prejudice; and men chuse and love *darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil*. Again,

Mens affections pervert their judgments, not only in respect of things, but of persons and characters; when they are prejudiced against each other, they can neither see any good, nor spare the least appearance of evil. The smallest blemishes are aggravated, while real excellencies are despised; nor are such less partial of those whom they like and favour, real faults are industriously concealed, and heinous crimes mitigated into infirmities. Virtues and good actions are magnified, and every tendency to merit, brightened into perfection. Thus affection supplants evidence, and serves instead of it; and love and hatred are made the standard of truth.

Lastly, no prejudice is more strong or powerful than interest. General experience shews how easily mens understandings are misled and deluded by it; place evidence in one scale, and interest in the other, and without great probity, the latter will prevail; what truth requires from us, as what is just, right, and fit to be done, is for the most part, very plain and clear, unless where interest *blinds mens eyes*, and tempts them to wrest and pervert judgment. It so darkens their perceptions, spreads such a mist before their understandings, as intercepts the strongest light, and makes them judge
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and act in opposition to reason, justice, and truth. Interest is the great *Diana* of the *Ephesians*, and almost universal idol of mankind ; all people fall down before it, and all nations do it service. It breaks through all obligations, confounds all duties, and God himself is rivalled by mammon. The purity and perfection of mens hearts and minds, are sacrificed to worldly profit ; and instead of devoting themselves to godliness, they are governed by gain. Hence the pure precepts and heavenly doctrines of Christ, have been often rejected ; and the glorious light of the gospel eclipsed by secular motives, and sordid considerations. In short, the most powerful cause of ignorance and prejudice, error and darkness, is that idolatrous love, that friendship of the world, which is at enmity with God.

I now proceed to shew the degree and extent of this mischief, implied in this question, *how great is that darkness?* The degree of darkness caused by a depraved mind and judgment, may be discovered, either from the nature of the thing, or from fact and experience. As to the nature of the thing, we are not to consider darkness here, as meer ignorance or want of knowledge, in the first stage of life, which is unavoidable ; and it becomes necessary to acquire a stock of ideas, before we can discover the truths belonging to them, till which the mind must be unenlightened. But this darkness gradually disappears, by observation and instruction ; and knowledge will in time advance, in proportion to mens opportunities and abilities. Indeed, too many when arrived at the years of maturity, comparatively speaking, are in a state of ignorance, by either wanting or neglecting the means of instruction. But this is not the darkness here meant ; which is much greater and produces far worse effects. For in the one case, a
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man is only to learn ; but in the other, he must unlearn a great deal, before he can learn to any purpose. Besides laying in a stock of truth, he must remove a heap of errors and prejudices, which have been gathered, by a careless or vicious education. There is no comparison between a mind barely ignorant, and one overrun with prejudice. In the former, though knowledge is wanted, yet there is a power and disposition to receive it ; but in the latter, it is strongly obstructed, by an aversion to the reception of truth.

If the eye either of body or mind be clear and single, we need only open it to the light, and attend to what it sees. But a distempered sight is very different ; for gross prejudices distemper the mind, and disable it for perception, and judgment ; and to cure which, requires great care, conduct, and resolution. An unprejudiced mind is easily convinced ; when the evidence of any truth is clear and strong, it soon gains assent. But the clearest evidence, the light and lustre of any object, is lost upon them, who, through the disease and depravation of their faculties, either cannot, or will not see : bring to such any point, and support it by the fairest arguments, yet they shall be overpowered by prejudices more strong and mighty. The force of truth, however great, is seldom sufficient to work its way through such obstructions. In short, the conquest of confirmed prejudices and inveterate errors, may be compared to the removal of rocks and mountains. It clearly appears then, that this intellectual disorder is very great ; extensive in its influence, powerful in its causes, and pernicious in its effects ; and yet to judge and determine by any other rule, than that of evidence, is as absurd, as to attempt measuring of sounds by the eye, or comparing colours by the ear. The sole object of the understanding is truth, and our per-

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perception of it solely depends on a due regard and attention to evidence. But if we forsake this, and give ourselves up to the guidance of prejudice, we then cease to be rational beings, and our understanding is given us in vain.

But the degree of that darkness, which is caused by this corruption of mind and judgment, is further evident from fact and experience every age and all histories : afford a variety of instances of this kind. If we reflect on the ignorance of the *Gentiles*, and the darkness of *paganism* ; we may soon find to what a degree the understandings of men are capable of being corrupted, and abused, and how deplorable such a corruption is ; more especially, in respect to the nature and worship of the deity. Though God never left himself without witness, but gave men faculties abundantly capable of finding him out ; though he had afforded them the strongest proofs and clearest evidences of his power, wisdom, goodness and perfection ; yet the strength of mens prejudices, had so darkened their minds, so depraved their judgments, and blinded their understandings, as to render them almost ignorant of the true God, and to believe and worship they know not what, instead of him ; hence the *truth of God was changed into a lye*, mens *foolish hearts were darkened*, and they not only *served the creature, more than the creator*, but deified the works of their own hands. Thus the *glory of the incorruptible God* was transferred to the most unintelligible objects, and divine worship was paid to *things that are not*, nor ever had any real existence ; to meer empty names, vain imaginations, and abstract ideas.

Nor were the *Jews* free from these vile practices and pagan pollutions, notwithstanding the frequent revelations of *Moses* and the prophets ; but they were continually sinking into the most stupid idolatry, nor could the terrors of mount *Sinai* restrain them ;

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them. After the most signal manifestations of God's power and majesty, they soon hardened their hearts, and relapsed into the abominations of the heathens round about them; and how were their eyes shut at the appearance of their promised Messiah? What a train of miraculous evidence, what wonderful works, and divine doctrines did they resist and set at naught? How did they oppose the strongest proofs, and steel their understandings against conviction? The lowness of his condition, the meanness of his appearance, and manner of his death, were such a stumbling-block to the *Jews*, that all arguments, and even miracles were ineffectual; nor had they *eyes to see, or ears to hear, for the light that was in them became darkness; and how great was that darkness?*

But what is yet more to be lamented, even christianity itself has been turned into obscurity, and the *marvellous light of the gospel* covered with thick clouds of error and superstition. In the midst of this glorious dispensation, a great many christians have walked in darkness, have stumbled at noon-day, as in the night, and groped for the truth, like the blindest heathen. They have been drawn aside by such gross delusions, as to lose sight both of human reason and divine revelation. For must not this be the case? must not mens judgments be extremely darkened and depraved, while they can embrace such corrupt doctrines, such monstrous absurdities, as are taught and established in the church of *Rome*? If reason or scripture is to direct us, can any thing appear more stupid and senseless, than to believe transubstantiation, and worship wafers? Surely nothing, unless the setting up of infallibility in the midst of such abominations. To teach things impossible to be true, and yet maintain they cannot err, is such an indignity to human understanding, such a defiance of com-
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mon sense, as can neither be paralleled nor expressed; and what greatly adds to the grievance, is the method of supporting and propagating this mystery of iniquity. It cannot subsist one moment on the foot of reason and evidence, and therefore must be crammed into mens minds by main force, and dint of persecution; and through the prejudices of education and authority, many well meaning men do believe, this method to be not only innocent, but laudable and meritorious. Thus the rules of justice and rights of conscience are shamefully violated, not to make way for truth, which needs no such methods, but for errors and absurdities, for a heap of falsehood, a mass of corruption; where evidence is not to be had, compulsion and violence supply its place. But though men cannot always see as directed, yet they can always feel. Though their understandings cannot in many cases be taken hold of, yet their senses may; and if the kingdom of darkness must be supported, no doubt this is the way. For where men dare not open their eyes, they will take care to keep them shut.

But the words of my text will be found true, not only in respect of religious doctrines and worship, but also in practice and common life. Men betray the bias of their judgments, and the blindness of their understandings in the courses they follow. For instance, the voluptuous person abandons himself without restraint, to sensual pleasures and sinful enjoyments, thinking that this is to employ his time and faculties to the best advantage. But this persuasion cannot be the dictate of his understanding, and the result of his judgment; no, it is rather the voice of passion, the result of appetite, proceeding from a mind greatly darkened and depraved. It is to say, the state of brute animals is preferable to angels, and that the image
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of God planted in our minds, is the least worthy of our care and concern. It is to conclude, that this life is more important than the next, and a few years of greater moment than eternity. And what can be more false, or argue greater darkness of mind, and pravity of judgment, than the conclusions?

If we consider the pursuits of *ambition*, where the passion rises high, we shall find the same darkness and erroneous judgment. Would the ambitious man allow himself leisure to reflect and deliberate, he would soon find how grossly his reason is betrayed and blinded by his inclination, in how deceitful a light he views things, and how false his estimates are. For let us suppose him to prosper in his own way, without interruption, and all his wishes crowned with success; yet what are the highest honours of this world, when compared with the glories of the next? The one is mean, empty, precarious and perishing; the other solid, sublime, constant, and everlasting. Therefore to give up the latter, for the sake of the former, is, as it were, to exchange pearls for pebbles, substances for shadows. For in fact, worldly ambition, however tempting, is in reality no better.

Nor is *avarice* less unreasonable and injudicious. A vice peculiarly noted for blinding mens eyes, and confounding their understandings. Indeed, it springs from error, darkness and depravation of judgment, and is sure to infatuate men; what can be more contrary to all the rules of reason and common sense, than the pursuits and measures of a miser? who toils and labours to the last moment of this life after a good he cannot enjoy, if he would; who converts the means into the end, and ever gets for the sake of getting; and the faster he gathers, the wider he grasps, the more he abounds, the more he dreads want, and yet is the better

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content to starve; and when he is near his end, and has one foot in the grave, he is then most solicitous to make provision for life. Such is the wisdom of avarice! as opposite to reason and sound judgment, and as little to be accounted for, as the dreams of a disordered imagination. Besides, the miser's conduct is more egregiously foolish, in that he prefers things temporal, before those that are eternal. Instead of improving in wisdom and virtue, and aiming to be *rich in good works*, he impoverishes his own soul, lays waste the gifts and graces of heaven, and sinks into idolatry. But surely this can never be any man's case, till the light of his mind be turned into darkness; and great must that darkness be; and this is more or less true of all sins, which are therefore properly called *works of darkness*. They begin in ignorance and error, and end in fraud and delusion; reason is undermined, judgment circumvented, and the powers of the understanding are by degrees vanquished. Thus is the mind of man corrupted, the image of God mangled and defaced. Instead of truth and wisdom, order and happiness, there is nothing but falsehood and folly, confusion and misery.

Would we desire effectually to prevent these evils, it is absolutely necessary, that we strike at the root of them. I mean, that we carefully guard against prejudices of all kinds, and preserve the light of our minds, pure, clear and uncorrupt. That the eye of the soul be kept single and sincere; fixed at all times upon evidence alone, viewing every object in its proper light and genuine colours. That we invariably observe the rule of truth, steadfastly resist every temptation, and withstand every propension tending to draw us from it. That we never submit to custom, nor authority, without duly examining the reasons brought to support them. That we strictly watch our own
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inclinations, lest they impose on our understanding, and give a wrong turn to our judgments. That no principle of vanity, no views of interest, be suffered to betray our integrity; but that we ever seek the truth, in the love thereof, with all simplicity and sincerity of mind. By carefully using these means, we shall be in a good measure fortified against erroneous judgment, and vicious practice; and the light which God has given us, will not only be maintained, but continually improved; and our faculties will have full scope to exert themselves to the greatest advantage; so that all our hopes, and all our welfare, depend on the use of those talents which God has given us. If we suffer them to be corrupted and spoiled, the damage must be great, the loss irreparable. But if we employ them wisely and well, our care will turn to the noblest account, and we shall reap the fruits of it for ever. It behoves us then to be watchful and circumspect, in a concern of so much moment; and to render our endeavours the more effectual, let us implore the assistance of heaven, that by the illumination of God's holy spirit, we may have a right judgment in all things; that so walking in the light of his truth, we may at length attain to the light of everlasting life, thro' Jesus Christ our Lord.

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DISCOURSE IV. Abp. Sharp.

Of faith and reason, and private judgment.

1 Pet. 3. 15.

*Be ready always to give an answer to every man,
that asketh you a reason, of the hope that is in you.*

BY hope is here meant, that faith, doctrine, or religion which christians do profess, and upon which their hope of another life is grounded. From hence it plainly appears, that all christians should so far inquire into the ground of that religion which they profess, and build their hopes on, as to be always ready and prepared, to give such a reasonable account of it, as may satisfy any unprejudiced mind, that their belief and profession are founded on reason. Faith and reason are not inconsistent with each other; for this precept requires us to give a reason for what we believe; nor are we obliged to believe any thing that is unreasonable, or that we cannot give a reason for. We may also from hence observe, that every man ought to enquire into his religion, and not rely on the authority and judgment of other men, without examining into what is proposed by them. These two, which are plainly contained in the text, shall be the subjects of this discourse.

I am first to prove, that reason and faith are not inconsistent things; or, that the religion which is of God, doth not in any one part do violence to our reason. In order to prove this, I would observe, 1st, That nothing proposed to us to be believed, as a matter of faith, or article of religion,

is further to be received by us, than our reason convinces us of its truth. 2. That we have no way to judge or be convinced of the truth of any article of our faith or religion, but its being agreeable to the principles of natural religion; for whatever is apparently repugnant to, or inconsistent with the principles of natural religion, cannot be true, and therefore ought not to be believed as an article of our faith or religion. 3. That though there may be many things in religion highly reasonably to be believed, which natural reason could not discover, nor comprehend when revealed; yet there may be sufficient reason to convince us of the truth of them, though we cannot answer all the difficulties that may be raised against them. As to the

First, That nothing proposed to our belief as an article of religion, is further to be entertained by us, than we have reason for its truth. This I think is universally acknowledged by all mankind. For no one ever endeavoured to bring another to his opinion, but what offered some reasons for his embracing it; and no man ever changed his sentiments in religion, or in other concerns, but he thought he had reason so to do; a man cannot believe as he pleases. He cannot assent to any thing, unless reason, or something like it, inclines him to it. Whatever power the will of man hath to determine itself, yet the understanding must always act according to the evidence it has; a man cannot be convinced of any truth, further than he is satisfied, that there are solid and strong reasons to persuade him to it.

Secondly, We have no other measure to judge of the truth of any religion, than its being agreeable to the principles of our natural reason; for the proof of which, the former proposition hath laid a sufficient foundation. When therefore any thing

is proposed to our belief, we must examine whether there be sufficient cause to believe it; and this can only be done, by comparing the thing in question by some rules or principles of our own minds, whereby the truth or falshood may be discovered; so that we have in ourselves, some fixed certain rules and principles, whereby to judge of the truth and falshood of whatever is proposed to us, and this is our natural reason; or our understandings acting according to those notions, that are natural to it, or collected from our senses. These are the principles by which we judge of all things in the world, that are not self-evident, or which require no proof to recommend them to our belief; and the comparing things with these principles, and making conclusions therefrom, is what we call reason; and there is no other sure way of distinguishing truth from falshood but this. And if every man in all other things that most nearly concerns him, doth judge by this rule and measure, why should he not also do this in matters of religion? What pretence is there, that religion only should be exempted from the tribunal of reason, to which all men submit their other concerns? Indeed, if religion was designed to destroy our natures, and that it was one thing to be a man, and another to be religious, something might be said. But it is not so. God in obliging us to religion considers us as men; and he intends thereby not to destroy, but to improve our human natures; so that it is certain, we can have no principles to judge of religion by, but only those common ones of reason, which are planted in us, and constitute our nature, and by which all our actions are governed.

Should any one reply to this, that in concerns of religion, we are to be guided by divine revelation, and not by reason, which is unable to direct

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rect us in those things; this we readily grant. But still we are to judge of that revelation, whether it be from God or not, by the principles of our reason. It is most certain, that when we are once convinced God hath revealed his will in any point, we ought immediately to believe and adhere to it; because God cannot deceive others, nor be deceived himself. But then the question is, how shall we be satisfied that God hath made such a revelation? Must we take every doctrine for a divine revelation, that any one confidently affirms to be from God? If so, then we shall never be secure from having doctrines obtruded upon us for divine truths, which are utterly inconsistent with, and contradictory to one another. Again, if we must not take every thing for a revelation from God, that pretends to be so, then there is a necessity for us to examine, if what comes to us recommended as such, doth really deserve that name; and by what rules or measures can we examine this, but by those principles of truth, which God hath implanted in our natures, antecedently to all positive revelations of his will?

If any will farther object, that we are not to judge of God's revelations by reason, but by the spirit; in answer to such, let me ask, what they mean by the spirit? If they mean only the assistance of the holy spirit, given to good people for removing their prejudices and sinful lusts, which hinder them from making use of their reason and discerning faculties, in finding out the truth; we grant this to be true. For we do believe, that the spirit of God, doth thus concur with every good man, to work faith in him, and make him a believer. But if by the spirit, which is to judge of all things belonging to God and religion, they mean a principle in a man, that hath no agreement with that other principle of his nature, which
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we call reason, then we utterly deny what they affirm. For such a spirit as this last ought not to have any influence upon our understandings, or to be any rule or measure of our belief. For then we could never have any fixed rule to distinguish between the spirit of truth and falshood, when yet we are not to *believe every spirit, but to try the spirits whether they be of God or no*; and what rule have we to try the spirits by, but the principles of reason implanted in our nature; that is, our senses, and the dictates of that natural religion, which every man is born with.

Hence it follows, that whatever religious matter is proposed to us, if it plainly and evidently contradicts the principles of natural reason, and is repugnant thereto, we ought not to believe it comes from God, because it cannot be true; for if we are to judge of the truth of divine revelations, by the principles of our reason, then surely whatever is contained in any revelation, pretended to be divine, that is evidently contradictory to those rational principles; this is a just argument for us to reject such a revelation as to that point; for truth cannot be repugnant to truth, and contraries cannot be supposed to come from God.

But say some, may not God reveal to men, and oblige them to believe what is contrary to reason? I answer, no more than he can deny himself. For if once we can believe that any part of God's revelations doth contradict the common principles of reason implanted in our nature, we must then believe, that God can do contrary things at the same time; which notion must destroy all truth and morality. If then any person endeavours to persuade us to the belief of any point, let us first satisfy ourselves, that the thing is not contrary to our reason and senses; if it be, we must reject it. For instance, if any man would persuade me to belief, that what appears to be bread and wine in the sacrament

crament of the lord's supper, is not really bread and wine, but the very body and blood of Christ, that was broken and shed seventeen hundred years ago, and is now at God's right hand; I ought not to believe this, because it contradicts my own reason and senses; for though our saviour says, *this is my body and this is my blood*, yet he could never mean them in that sense, for then he must in effect tell me. I am not to believe my own eyes, my taste, nor feeling, in a plain matter of sense, nor my own reason in a thing that is the most obvious. Again,

If any one would persuade me to worship the blessed virgin or any other saint, assuring me that several miracles have been wrought to prove this, I must also refuse my assent upon the same account. For if a thousand miracles were performed, as is said, by the virgin or other saints, yet if God hath long before declared, that we are to pay divine worship to none but himself; and if such declaration has been of old confirmed by an infinite number of undoubted miracles, both of *Moses* and the prophets, of Christ and his apostles, we ought to disregard all other miracles. For God's will being once declared by many unexceptionable miracles, that is to be our standing rule to walk by; and all other miracles opposed to these, we ought to consider as the delusions of the devil, or the impostures of designing men; it being an eternal and unalterable principle of reason, that when God hath once made a law to mankind, and declared that he will never alter or change it, that law is always binding, whatever pretences of new attestations from heaven be made use of, to make us believe that it is altered or repealed. Thirdly, there may be many things in religion highly reasonable to be believed, which natural reason could neither discover, nor afterwards comprehend. Though God doth not oblige us to believe any thing contrary to reason, yet we do

acknowledge, that he requires us to believe several things which cannot be demonstrated by reason, and yet are most reasonable, that we should believe them. For instance, it cannot be demonstrated by reason, that God should send his son Jesus Christ for the salvation of mankind; much less that he should suffer a cruel death, as a sacrifice for the sins of the world; nor can it be proved by reason, that this Jesus will come again at the end of the world, to judge visibly in person the quick and the dead; and that then all who have died, shall be raised, and their bodies united to their souls, which we call the resurrection. The most rational and sagacious man upon earth, could never have discovered this method of God's proceeding with mankind. So that these things we believe upon the sole authority of divine revelation, and know them to be true, because God hath said so. But then these doctrines revealed to us by our saviour and his apostles, appear so highly reasonable in themselves, and are every way so suitable to the goodness, and justice, and wisdom of God; that any man's reason, if sincere and unprejudiced, cannot but heartily assent to them, as soon as they are fairly proposed with the evidence that attends them.

But there is yet another sort of doctrines more mysterious, which our christianity obliges us to believe, that are not so plain and obvious as the former; such are two articles of our religion, the doctrine of the incarnation, and that of the trinity; not that these doctrines are unintelligible, for we may truly understand and form a consistent notion of both these, if we do not too curiously pry into them. There is nothing in them contrary to our common sense and reason, and so they may possibly be true. We can prove, that God hath actually revealed and taught them by his son, and so we are certain they are true. This is sufficient satisfaction

for our reason, and sufficient evidence for our faith. We are only to examine, whether Christ and his apostles taught these doctrines, and when convinced of this, we are to believe them heartily, to profess them constantly, and to worship God according to the discoveries he hath made of his nature, without entering into nice questions and speculations about them.

But the papists rather than for us not to believe transubstantiation would have us doubt of the trinity and Christ's incarnation. For they pretend, there is the same evidence for the one doctrine, as for the other ; and as for the point of reason, that the one is involved with as many difficulties and absurdities as the other ; and therefore why should not both equally be believed ? As this will be more fully considered in another discourse, I will only here briefly observe three differences between transubstantiation on the one hand, and the trinity and incarnation on the other. And first there is not the same evidence in the word of God, for the former as for the two latter. 2dly. Transubstantiation falls under the cognizance of our senses and reason ; but the trinity and incarnation have an infinite God for their object, to whose nature, neither our senses nor our reason is any ways adequate or commensurate. 3dly, There are manifest absurdities and contradictions in the one doctrine, but none at all in the other two ; though they are above our reason, yet they are not contrary to it. I now proceed to shew,

Secondly, that it is not enough for our faith or religion to be reasonable in itself, but it is the duty of all who profess that faith so to satisfy himself of the reasonableness of his belief, as to be able to answer them who ask a reason of it ; and therefore every one ought to enquire into the grounds of his faith and religion, and not to rely upon any human

authority, and believe without examination, what is proposed to him. Indeed, this is not asserted in direct words in the text, but may be inferred by a necessary consequence. For if every christian ought so to inform himself about what he believes, as to be able to give others a *reason of his faith*, he then certainly ought to examine whatever is proposed to his belief, in order to form a judgment, whether it be reasonable for him to believe it or no. This is a direct and natural consequence from the text, and every way taught and delivered as the privilege and duty of all christians, even of private persons. St. *Paul* directs not only the bishops and pastors of souls, but all people, *to prove all things and hold fast that which is good**, to try and examine the doctrine, whether it be good, and then to embrace and hold it fast. St. *John* also spoke to all christians; *beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false spirits are gone out into the world†*. The meaning of which is, that we are not to believe every one who pretends to be inspired, and to deliver doctrines as the infallible truths of God; but to examine whether their credentials come from God, and if the doctrine they teach be agreeable to those principles of natural and revealed religion, which we are sure came from God, because there are *many false prophets*, or teachers, *gone out into the world*.

Thus our saviour exhorts the people to *search the scriptures*‡, as the true way for them to believe both in him and his doctrines. He reproaches them for blindly following their guides; *if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch†*. He expostulates with them for relying too much on the authority of their teachers, and so rejecting his doctrines. *Why of yourselves*, says he, *did ye not judge what*.

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* 1 Thess. 5. 21. † 1 John 4. 1. ‖ John 5. 39.
‡ Matt. 15. 14.

what is right? Surely then, it is most plain from the new testament, that God not only allows, but also requires that every man should judge for himself, in what concerns his salvation; and to be at liberty to examine doctrines of faith by the common principles of reason and divine revelation; and either to admit or reject them, as he finds them agreeable to, or inconsistent with such principles, and St. Paul says, *if we, or an angel from heaven, preach to you any other gospel than what ye have received, let him be accursed**; so that neither St. Paul the greatest of all the apostles, nor yet an angel from heaven, are to be believed, when they teach any thing contrary to, and inconsistent with God's revealed will in the scriptures, but even such are to be rejected as impostors and false prophets.

From hence then we may learn, that there is but one gospel; namely, that which was preached by Christ and his apostles, and is contained in the books of the new testament: and whatever article of faith is proposed to our belief, if contrary to that gospel, is to be rejected as a false doctrine; and such preachers of it, if they shew never so many miracles for the proof of their mission, are but false prophets. So that every man who believes the gospel of Christ, is to judge for himself, whether any doctrine proposed to him be agreeable or not to that gospel; and if inconsistent with it, he is to reject it, though St. Paul or an angel from heaven should preach it. For if every man is not to judge for himself, why should St. Paul so solemnly tell the people of Galatia, that they should adhere to that gospel he had preached to them, and withstand all the pretences of any false teachers; *so that if he himself, or any angel from heaven should preach to them any other Gospel than what they had received before, they should not be heard**. Did he not in this make them the judges of that gospel, and of what was

* Gal. 1, 8.

consistent, or not, with it? Was not that gospel the standard by which they were to judge of all new doctrines, and they to be the judges thereof? For let me ask, whether it had been a crime in the *Galatians*, after St. *Paul* had thus warned them, to have embraced any doctrines of false apostles contrary to the gospel? If it was, then they were true and proper judges of what was the doctrine of the gospel, and what was not. It was their duty, being instructed in the gospel, to compare the novel doctrines of false teachers with it, and as they found them disagreeing with the gospel, to have rejected them. If this had not been their duty, it could not have been their sin, to have followed false teachers in their new doctrines. So that the inference is strong and undeniable, that every man is to judge for himself in matters concerning his salvation; and God having given him a rule to judge by, he is to examine all doctrines proposed to him by that rule; and whatever he finds different from or inconsistent with that rule he is to reject, let it come from what man or church it will.

But how plain soever this seems to be, yet there is no small stir about it, and upon this very point the main disputes do turn, which now divide the christian church in these parts of the world. We all agree, that the religion of Jesus Christ is the only way to salvation; and that every one ought so far to enquire into Christ's religion, as to know what it is, and where to be found. But as christianity now prevails among us, there are two different ways proposed to know Christ's religion. The one is that of the *Roman* catholics, which in short is this, that every man as to the concern of his soul, is to enquire and examine till he be satisfied which is the true church of Christ. But when once he has found the true church, he must examine no farther, but yield up himself to the government of that

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church, and believe whatever it teacheth, without farther examination ; because the true church is infallible, and can neither be deceived, nor yet deceive others.

The other way is that of the protestants, which is this. That Jesus Christ being the sole author of our faith and religion, we ought not to believe any thing as an article of faith, or as necessary to salvation, but what he or his inspired apostles taught ; nor can we certainly know this but by the holy scriptures. These we are sure are the word of God, and contain all the necessary points that Christ and his apostle preached to the world ; and “ whatever is not contained in them, or may not be proved by them, is not required of any to be believed, as of necessity to salvation, 6th article.” Whatever doctrine therefore proposed to us, as an article of faith, if the scripture teacheth it, or it may by good consequence be proved from thence, we do heartily embrace it ; and we do reject whatever is repugnant to the holy scriptures. And this right or privilege of examining and trying matters of religion by the holy scriptures, we do not appropriate solely to the guides of the church, but also allow it to every man, so far as he hath means and opportunity to inform himself. For since as the papists say, every man’s salvation depends upon his professing the true religion of Christ, it is most reasonable, that every one should judge for himself about that religion ; and since, as we say, that all the religion of Christ is contain’d in the scriptures, it is most reasonable, that every one should be well satisfied, that the doctrines which are proposed to him as articles of faith, are really the doctrines of holy scripture. And whether they be so or not, he is the sole judge, taking in all the best helps he can have to make such judgment. This is a plain account of the two ways proposed by us and the papists, for coming

coming to the true faith. Both agree, that every man is bound to examine into his own religion, *and to be able to give a reason for the hope that is in him*: But here we differ; the papists say, we are to examine till we have found the true church, which when found, we are for ever after to be concluded by its determination. The protestants say, that a man cannot know the true church, but by examining the doctrines it teacheth, whether they be of Christ or not; and since this can only be known by examining, whether such doctrines do really agree with those taught in the holy scriptures, there is a necessity for every man to try his faith by the holy scriptures, and after that to judge for himself; so that there is a material difference between us.

The papists do only enquire into religion to find out the true church, and then they submit to its guides in all things. The protestants enquire into Christ's religion, as taught by the word of God, by which they find out the true church. The one believes the doctrines of religion, for the churches sake that teacheth them; the other believes the church for the doctrines sake, as being agreeable to the word of God. The one takes up their religion from the church; the other takes up their church from its religion. If a protestant be required to *give a reason of the hope that is in him*, he will think it necessary to give a rational account of all the articles of his faith. But if a papist be required to do this, he thinks it sufficient to say, that he rests satisfied in the judgment of his superiors; so that if the church can give a reason of the faith, it is no great matter whether the man can or no. But let us briefly examine both these.

Though the papists allow, that we are to examine and enquire into religion, so as to be able to give a reason of our faith, yet the main thing to be enquired into is, *which is the true church where infallibility*

liberty is lodged? For where that church is found, which is only in the church of *Rome*, as they say, our enquiry is at an end; we are then to believe and obey the church. Now the best way to answer this, will be to ask a few questions. First then, since they acknowledge, that we are to make use of our skill, reason, and sagacity, to find out the true church, why must we all of a sudden, after we have found it, discard these things, and never more employ either our skill, our reason, or understanding to judge of any point concerning our souls? This is a very unfair dealing with those parts and capacities God has given us. In all other affairs of life, we find that those powers and faculties in us, which first enable us to understand any business, are necessary to conduct us therein ever after. But in matters of religion, according to the papist's doctrine, reason, studying, examination and search, tho' necessary tools, to be used for putting a man into their hands, yet after this is done, he is to throw these away, and never use them more. But surely this cannot be a doctrine of God. For whoever understands the dignity of his own nature, and knows what reason is, will be of another opinion. The doctrine of papists supposes, that we are able to chuse our way so long as we are heretics, and all that time allow us to enquire and examine, to prove and to try. But when any hath found the true church, (that is their church) then they are no longer to examine, prove or try. But what is this but to tell us, that God hath given us eyes for the choice of our guide, but when we have got a good one, we must then put out our eyes, and act as our guide orders us.

Another question I would ask is this; how we shall find the true church, but by comparing the doctrines which the church holds with the holy scriptures? Indeed the papists have taken much pains to give us the notes of the true church, and if
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one mark of the true church be, as *Bellarmino* says, that it should teach the doctrine of Christ, then certainly we cannot know the true church, till we have examined and enquired, whether the doctrines it teaches, be honest, christian, pious and agreeable to the gospel of Christ; so that after all, every man is to examine by the word of God, what things he is to believe in order to his salvation.

DISCOURSE V. *Abp. Sharpe.*

Of the infallibility of the church of *Rome*.

1 *Pet.* 3. 15.

Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you.

I Have already shewn *, that it appears from this text, to be the duty of every christian, so to satisfy himself about the reasonableness of his belief, as to be able to answer them that ask a reason of it; and that every man ought to enquire into the grounds of his faith or religion, and not so to rely upon the authority of his guides, as to believe every thing proposed by them, without examination. I shall now proceed to consider the infallibility of the church of *Rome*. Both papists and protestants agree, that the scriptures are infallible; but we say they are likewise so plain in all necessary points, that every christian by using the means he hath in his power, may rightly understand.

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derstand them, in all points needful to his salvation; so that every honest christian hath a sure foundation to build his faith upon: on the other side the papists assert, that a private man cannot be certain of his being in the right way, unless he adheres to the faith and doctrines of their church, which is the only infallible interpreter of scripture.

But suppose a man doth sincerely believe this, a question will then arise, how he shall know whether he believes all points of faith, as the church doth? or else his faith will be imperfect; for allowing the church of *Rome* to be infallible, yet this will signify nothing, unless he knows what that church teacheth. But how can he know this, better than he knows what the scripture teacheth, or indeed half so easily? Since the definitions of the *Romish* church in matters of faith, are more in number, more nice, and intricate than those of the scripture.

To this it is answered, that private men who have not abilities and opportunities of learning the doctrines of the church from its authentic decrees, must rest satisfied in the judgment and direction of their particular guides, and take the doctrines of the church from them. But then let me ask, are such particular guides infallible? If they be not, then the guides themselves may be mistaken, and so mislead the person who trusts to them; and if so, what service will the church's infallibility be to his faith? and to say that particular guides are infallible, is more than they pretend to. But supposing every guide or confessor was as infallible in what he taught for doctrines of the church, as the head of the church himself is, yet the difficulty still remains. Because when a guide doth even rightly expound the catholic faith to a private person, yet how is such a person certain, that he rightly understands the meaning of those doctrines, that

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his guide declares to be the faith of the church? And if all private men may mistake what is taught them, then what security hath any one who gives himself up entirely to the conduct of his guide, that he is not mistaken in matters of faith, any more than we have, who besides the help of our guides, do also make use of our own eyes, in examining the scriptures as to what doctrines they teach? Nay, is not our security much greater than theirs? There seems to be the same difference in our cases, as between a man's receiving a piece of coin for current money, meerly upon the credit of his goldsmith without further trial; or for a man's both advising with his goldsmith, and also making use of all other helps he can get, for the distinguishing true money from counterfeit. So that admitting the *Romish* church to be infallible, yet private persons would not be the better for it, nor more secure from error in faith, than we who pretend to no infallibility; unless every particular guide, who is to convey the church's faith to us, be likewise infallible. Nay, admitting every teacher of the church to be infallible in what he taught, yet even this will not secure us from error, unless the person who hears him, is also as infallible in understanding the true sense of those doctrines, as the teacher is infallible in proposing them; so that supposing the *Romish* church's infallibility, we see of what little use it is to any man.

But the main point on which this dispute is founded, is, whether Christ hath any infallible church upon earth, or no? And if it shall appear that no church on earth is infallible, it will be needless to confute the claim that any particular church makes to this privilege. In considering this point, upon which most others depend, between us and the church of *Rome*, for the clearer stating of the question, we will discard all disputes about
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that church's infallibility in fundamentals. We readily grant, that the church of Christ is infallible in all points necessary to salvation. Indeed we do not much approve of the word infallibility, it being improperly used; because in truth, the church is not more infallible in fundamentals, than in points not fundamental. And therefore, though I use the word here, you will remember, that all I mean, when I say, that the catholic (not *Romish*) church is infallible in fundamentals, amounts only to this, that where there is a church of Christ, as he hath promised there shall always be one; that church will retain all the foundations of Christ's doctrine, and teach all such things as are absolutely necessary to salvation. For in truth without allowing this, it would be no church at all. But then this doth not prove, that any particular church cannot err and fail, even in fundamental points, and so as to cease to be any longer a true church. Because God hath not confined his catholic [or true] church to any particular place or country. It is sufficient for the fulfilling of Christ's promises, that there shall be to the end of the world, somewhere or other, a true church of Christ, professing and teaching all the essential necessary points of his religion, which is all that is needful to the making of a church.

Nor doth this concession of ours hinder, but that every particular church, nay all the churches of the world, (though they be as we term it, infallible in fundamentals, and do hold the foundation of Christ's religion, and are therefore true churches;) may still err and mistake in things not belonging to the foundation. Christ hath not secured them, even while they continue true churches, either from teaching falshood for truth, or imposing such practices upon their members, as are inconsistent with the laws of God; so that they can-

cannot be relied on meerly upon account of their authority, without examining their doctrines and practices, which is the true state of this point. The question then to be discussed is, whether Christ hath any church upon earth, in all things absolutely infallible, and at all times secured from errors in whatever she teacheth in matters of religion? This question the church of *England* determines in the negative; and though it be a very hard and unreasonable task to prove negatives, yet I will fairly represent some of the many reasons, why we do not believe, that Christ ever intended there should be such an infallible church.

The first thing I offer is this; that if Christ had designed there should be always an infallible church upon earth, he would certainly have expressly told us, in the new testament, in which of all the churches in the world, this infallibility was lodged; that so christians might in all ages know where to have recourse to that infallible church. But this not being done, neither by our saviour, nor his apostles, it is a strong argument that no such thing was ever intended by them. For if the texts which are produced out of the new testament as proofs of the church's infallibility, were but fairly considered, it will appear to any unbiassed reader, that they do not speak at all of infallibility, unless in what concerns the apostles themselves.

Thus to prove the church's infallibility, they urge our saviour's words to *Peter*, "I say unto thee, thou art *Peter*, and upon this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it *." But whatever be here meant by the rock, either *St. Peter's* person, or faith, as most of the fathers interpret it, yet it is plain, that Christ here did only promise a *perpetuity*, and not *infallibility* to his church. He did

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* Matt. 16. 18.

not say his church should never err, but that it should never perish; which is the meaning of the phrase, that *the gates of hell shall never prevail against his church*. They also urge these words of our saviour, *if a man's brother trespass against him*, and the matter be not made up, the injured person was to tell the business to the church; and if the man refused to hear the church, he was then to be accounted *as an heathen*, or a *publican* †. It is plain, that Christ here means no more by *telling the church*, than this, that if the man could not agree with his brother that had injured him, he was publickly to complain to the congregation; and if upon the advice or rebukes of the governor of the assembly, the man did not make satisfaction, but continued obstinate, the injured person was no further obliged to endeavour to bring him to a sense of his fault, but might afterwards consider him as a stranger or heathen, and no longer a brother; and what has this to do with infallibility? This rather proves the infallibility of every congregation, or bishop's consistory, in redressing complaints, than the infallibility of the church in determining matters of faith. Again,

It is urged, that Christ told his apostles, *he would be with them*, that is, with them and the bishops who succeeded them, *to the end of the world*. No doubt; Christ will always by the influence of his spirit, be present, not only with the governors, but with every member of the church. But this doth not imply, that every bishop or member is infallible. Another text is, that Christ promised his apostles, *to send the comforter to them, even the spirit of truth*, and when he came he should lead them *into all truth* *. This is very true, and our saviour did by his spirit lead the apostles *into all truth*; who did infallibly, and with an unerring spirit, preach

† Matt. 18. 15, 17.

* John 16. 13.

preach all the truths of God, and nothing but the truth. But then this promise it is plain, was only made to the apostles, and not to any after them; for he adds, *and he will shew you things to come*; that is, he would endue the apostles with the gift of prophecy. But do those who succeed the apostles in the church now pretend to any such assistance of the spirit as this? If the bishop of any church can prove, that they have the gift of prophecy in a continued succession, and can *foretell things to come*, as the apostles did, then we will own that this promise of Christ was directed to his church in all ages. Lastly, St. Paul's words to *Timothy*, is urged as another proof for the church's infallibility; *that the church was the pillar and ground of the truth**. Now it is plain, that St. Paul here speaks, not of the church, but of a particular church, that of *Ephesus*, which church is not now in being, though when it was, it was a *stay and support of truth*. But how does this prove, that any church is now infallible? And were we to understand these words as the papists do, yet even then it will do them no service. For admit he might stile *the church a pillar, and support of truth*, not because it is and always shall be so; but because it ought to be so; just as our saviour calls his disciples and all christians, *the salt of the earth*, and yet says, that that *salt may become unsavory*. It is the duty of christians to be *the salt of the earth*, and of the church, to be a *pillar and support of truth*; but it doth not hence follow, that either the one or the other shall always perform these duties.

But we further say, that the church may be always *a pillar and ground of the truth*, and yet not infallible. Had St. Paul here spoke of the catholic church, he could only mean, that the church of Christ should always be the pillar and support of that truth, which makes up *the mystery*

* 1 Tim. 3. 15.

of godliness, spoken of in the next verse ; namely, that the fundamental truths of christianity, shall be always taught and professed in the church. But this falls infinitely short of infallibility. The church may be thus *a pillar and support of the truth*, and yet still teach a great many errors. But these words are in truth not to be understood of the church, but to be applied to *Timothy* himself, to whom the apostle writes, and are thus to be read. *These things I write unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly ; but if I tarry long, that thou mayst know how to behave in the house of God, the church of the living God, as a pillar and support of the truth* *. He directs *Timothy* how to behave in the church, which he calls the house of God ; and as he calls it an house, it could never be the pillar of an house. Indeed, the apostles and bishops are in scripture called pillars ; and if this be the sense of this text, as I think it is, then it can be of no service to the papists. These are the chief texts produced in favour of the church's infallibility ; and not one of them comes up to the point.

Another reason why we cannot believe that Christ hath any infallible church on earth is, because that none of the primitive churches, not even the church of *Rome*, did ever pretend to such infallibility. In truth, this doctrine is not asserted by any one ancient council or father ; nor can we see any effect of this infallibility in the world, or any good that hath accrued to the church, which may not as well be ascribed to God's ordinary assistance afforded to every christian church, without infallibility as with it ; and though the church of *Rome* pretends, that without a living infallible judge, controversies among christians cannot be ended ; yet with all their infallibility, they are not agreed among themselves about several points in religion,

* 1 Tim. 3. 14, 15.

religion, nay, it is a great controversy among them, where, or in whom, this infallibility is lodged.

Another reason why we think it unsafe to rely upon any church's infallibility, as to matters of faith is, because it can be made very apparent, that this church, which of all others claims infallibility to herself, hath actually erred in her determinations about matters of faith; and this is what our church hath fully declared in her 19th article; "as the church of *Jerusalem*, of *Alexandria*, and *Antioch* have erred, so also the church of *Rome* hath erred, not only in their living and manner of ceremonies; but also in matters of faith." And that the church of *Rome* is not an infallible church, I think I can evidently prove and demonstrate.

* "My reasoning is this ——— It is impossible for any arguments to convince me or any reasonable man, that the man, or church, who affirms a manifest falshood, is infallible. The church of *Rome* affirms a manifest falshood; and therefore I cannot believe that church is infallible, which I thus prove. No man, or church of men, are in their nature infallible. That the spirit of God may be so communicated as to render them infallible, I grant; and what any person so inspired affirms, I acknowledge God to affirm: but then I say, it is impossible for any man or church, who affirms a manifest falshood, to convince me of their having such a communication of God's spirit, because what is manifestly false, cannot be true, and God cannot affirm a manifest falshood. Had our saviour affirmed, that two and two made eight, though he had wrought a million of miracles, it could not have convinced any reasonable man, that he spake from the spirit of God; because it is more reasonable for a man to believe he might be imposed upon

* Dr. Rogers's reasons against the church of *Rome*.

upon by counterfeit miracles, than to believe the spirit of God could assert such evident untruths. Nor could the testimony of any revelation, though never so well confirmed by miracles, convince me, that a person who affirms a manifest falshood, is infallibly inspired by God, because then the revelation itself must appear to affirm a falshood.

Suppose it was promised in any revelation, that there should be in all ages a person infallibly inspired; a man comes to me and says — “ you admit this revelation, and in it ’tis promised, that there shall be in all ages a person infallibly inspired. I am that person, and in me centre all the characters under which he is described. I affirm, that two and two make eight, and in virtue of these proofs of my infallibility, I require you to believe me. If I acknowledge the revelation, and that there is such a promise in it, I must necessarily conclude, that this is not the person meant; because I am sure, that he who affirms so manifest a falsity, cannot be infallible. But if he convinces me, that he is the very person intended, I must then unavoidably conclude, that the supposed revelation is itself an imposture; because I am sure God cannot require me to believe that he, who affirms a manifest untruth, is infallible. I need not offer more in support of my assertion.

But that the church of *Rome* doth affirm a manifest falshood, I instance in the doctrine of *transubstantiation*, which that church doth confessedly teach, viz. “ That the bread and wine which are put upon the altar after the consecration, are not only the sacrament, but the true body and blood of our lord Jesus Christ; and are sensually not only in a sacrament, (or sacramentally) but in verity handled, and broken by the hands of the priests, and grinded by the teeth of the faithful *.” If they deny

* Gratian dec. p. 3. disc. 2. c. 42.

deny this to be their present doctrine, they must confess that a pope and synod acting by apostolical and evangelical authority, who prescribed this, were fallible; and if they own this to be true, they cannot attempt to prove their successors infallible. But it is affirmed in these words, that the real bodies of bread and wine become after consecration, really and even sensually the flesh and blood of Christ; which is as manifest a falshood, as, ——— *This stone is a fish. This brass is a serpent.*

If by the most attentive use of my faculties, I perceive that two bodies, which by all their marks and properties, are the one a stone, and the other bread, and yet that nevertheless the one is a real living fish, and the other real human flesh, then I must conclude it impossible for me to distinguish one body from another; that I am capable of no certainty in any perception; that all my ideas are only dream and illusion, and that God has created me with such faculties, whose reports I cannot depend on; and if I can be sure of nothing, it is to no purpose to enquire after truth; for I can neither believe nor disbelieve any thing. And if I can be sure of any thing, I must be sure, that what upon a strict examination I find to be a stone, is a stone, and not a fish; and by the same evidence, what I perceive to be bread, is bread, and not human flesh; no truths can be more evident than these. And therefore he who affirms, that what I thus perceive to be a stone, is a fish; and what I see to be bread, is not bread, but flesh, must appear to affirm a most manifest falshood. This manifest falshood the church of *Rome* affirms, which plainly proves, that church cannot be infallible. For no authority can convince me, that God has affirmed a manifest falshood, or that any church or person is infallible, who teaches, that
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God has affirmed what I evidently perceive to be false; because it is impossible for God to affirm a manifest falshood.

The doctrine of transubstantiation, as affirmed by the church of *Rome*, if there be any truth in human perceptions, must appear to be a manifest falshood. If they convince me that this doctrine is really affirmed in the gospel, they oblige me to conclude, that the gospel is not a divine revelation; nor can the truth of the alcoran be disproved by any stronger objection from the matter of it, than will lie against the gospel, supposing this doctrine to be affirmed in it; why then should I believe that this doctrine is affirmed in the gospel? To this, it is answered by the church of *Rome*, that the gospel hath promised she shall be infallible, and therefore I must believe it upon her authority; but if this doctrine be really part of the gospel, I can no longer believe that to be a divine revelation; and then what becomes of the infallible expositor? And was it certainly revealed, that there should be an infallible expounder of the gospel, which I deny; I should never believe this to be promised to the church of *Rome*, because her exposition subverts the authority of that revelation, and teaches me to believe that God has affirmed in it, what I manifestly perceive to be false. So that with the same certainty, that I believe the gospel revelation, I must disbelieve the infallibility of the church of *Rome*, in this exposition of it. For when she affirms a manifest falshood as the sense of scripture, I have no farther occasion to consider any direct proofs of infallibility; so insuperable a disproof as this, determines me at once in the negative, and obliges me to conclude her not only fallible, but less credible than any other guide.

The words, *this is my body*, I confess are in scripture, and if what they literally affirm, had not been

a manifest falshood, I should readily assent to them in that sense. But while I acknowledge the divine authority of scripture, I cannot upon any pretence of infallibility, admit a sense of it, subversive of that authority; and consequently, if I believe this scripture to be a divine revelation, I must find some other sense more agreeable to it, than what the church of *Rome* gives us; and if another expositor assigns an easy natural sense to these words of Christ, that agrees to an usual way of speaking, and which acquits the scriptures from all objection, I must, if I will act rationally, prefer this expositor though fallible, to one who under pretence of infallibility requires me to understand them, in a sense inconsistent with their being a divine revelation.

Suppose a man holding a stone in his hand, should affirm, *this stone is a fish*. If he affirms this in a literal sense, it is a manifest falshood; and should an angel from heaven attest his assertion, I could not believe it for the reasons before given; when our saviour tells *Nicodemus*, *a man must be born again*, if we understand these words literally as he did, that a man must enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, this must appear incredible, impossible; and take away all authority from the person affirming it. But if we understand the words figuratively, as signifying a spiritual regeneration, all difficulty vanishes, and the expression is easy and intelligible; and the matter affirmed very consistent with the character of a teacher sent from God.

So when our lord says, — *take, eat, this is my body*; and of this cup — *drink ye all of it, for this is my blood of the new testament which is shed for you — do this in remembrance of me*. If we understand him in these words and actions, as instituting an ordinance to be perpetually observed in his church, in commemoration of that sacrifice he was
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about to offer on the cross; and teaching us by them, that as they who did eat of the sacrifices under the law, in which he was prefigured, communicated in the benefits and propitiation of them; so they who should eat this bread, and drink this wine, consecrated according to his appointment, should as effectually partake of the benefits of his sacrifice, as if they had materially eaten and drank that body and blood he was going to offer; that in this spiritual and sacramental sense, they should be verily and indeed his body and blood; no longer to be considered as common ordinary bread and wine, but revered as holy symbols of his body and blood, which, by the co-operation of his spirit, would become an effectual means of grace, to the worthy receiver. In this sense, the words are easy, natural, and free from all difficulty or absurdity, and most consistent with the scheme and intention of the christian religion; and therefore we may safely admit this sense, whether the expositor be infallible or not. But we can never believe the divine inspiration of a speaker, who asserts so manifest a falsehood, as the doctrine of transubstantiation, which is so palpable a contradiction to sense and reason, as that *the bread and wine are really and sensually the flesh and blood of Christ — broken by the hands of the priest, and ground by the teeth of the faithful*; which cannot possibly be the sense of them; and consequently, that the church of Rome, who affirms this doctrine to be the sense of them, cannot be an infallible expositor of scripture.

DISCOURSE VI. Dr. Clarke.

Of the pope's supremacy over the whole church.

Matt. 16. 18.

— *Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

OUR saviour, having examined his disciples how far they understood the doctrine they had been taught, asks them, *ver. 13. whom do men say, that I, the son of man, am?* These words sufficiently intimating whom he was. For the phrase, *the son of man*, necessarily signifies one who is so styled by way of eminence or distinction; and in discourse with persons who had been educated *Jews*, it could not but be understood to refer to the use of that title or character, some where in the old testament. And thus did *Daniel* prophecy *, “Behold, one like the son of man came with the clouds of heaven, (the same son of man which is in heaven, *John* 3. 13.) and came to the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him: and there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away; and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.” All the *Jews* very well knew, that this was a plain prophecy and character of the *messiah*. And by our saviour's taking upon himself the title of *the son of man*, this clearly in-

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timated,

* Dan. 7. 13.

timated, whom he professed himself to be. But in order to give them more particular instruction, he asks them, “†whom say ye that I am? *Simon Peter* answered, thou art Christ the son of the living God. Then said *Jesus* unto him, blessed art thou, *Simon Barjona*, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my father which is in heaven.” That is, the conjecture you have made, is not a bare human conjecture or opinion, but it is the very truth, which God has enabled you to discover; *And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter*, ver. 18. Thou *Simon*, the son of *Jonah*, shall for the future be called *Peter*, which signifies a *rock*, a firm and constant, an unshaken and immovable professor of the truth. It was usual in scripture to give men emphatical and significant names. Thus “thy name shall be called *Abraham*, for a father of many nations have I made thee,*” (for so *Abraham* signifies in the original.) Again, “thy name shall be called *Israel*; for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.” So here likewise, *thou art Peter*, that is, a *rock*; a firm and constant, a faithful and unshaken witness, support, and defender of the truth; and *upon this rock*, upon this firmness and steadiness of yours, in professing and preaching the great truths of the gospel, upon this “will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it; and I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.”

In order more clearly to understand this discourse of our saviour's, it will be necessary to explain from the beginning, the nature and meaning, the ground and reason of that figure of speaking, which

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in the text, and many other places of scripture, is used with great propriety and elegance, in the description of the church of Christ. It is therefore to be observed, that God having anciently placed his name in *Jerusalem*, appointing it to be the seat of his throne, and the place of the worshippers of the one true God, and by way of eminence, the *city of the great king, the holy city*; it from thence became in the prophetic stile and language, a type of heaven. From hence, the state of heaven is stiled "*Jerusalem* which is above, mount *Sion*, the heavenly *Jerusalem* *." And in the *Revelations*, it is at large described, under the notion of a glorious and happy city, "he shewed me that great city, the holy *Jerusalem*, descending out of heaven from God; having the glory of God, and her light, was like unto a stone most precious — and the city was pure gold †." To which the apostle plainly alludes, "he hath prepared for them a city; and, *says he*, they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly ‡." And "*Abraham* looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." And in pursuance of the same similitude, the church of God upon earth, is stiled, *the city, the temple, and the house of God*. "Ye are come unto the city of the living God, — the general assembly and church of the first born whose names are written in heaven ||, ye are the temple of the living God." Lastly, it is called, "the house of God, which is the church, a spiritual house unto God; judgment must begin at the house of God †."

The church of God being thus usually represented in scripture, under the figurative notion of a *holy city, temple, or house of God*, the several parts of

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* Gal. 4. 26. Heb. 12. 22. † Rev. 21. 10.

‡ Heb. 11. 16, 10. || Heb. 12. 22. 2 Cor. 6.

16. † 1 Tim. 3. 15. 1 Pet. 2. 5. 4. 17.

it are likewise described under the like characters and figures of speech, as the whole. Hence the word foundation, as denoting the most material part and support of the whole building, is elegantly made use of, to signify, either such men or things, persons or doctrines, upon which the whole of religion mainly relies, and by which it is principally supported: sometimes it is applied to doctrines, denoting those great, primary, necessary and essential doctrines of religion, upon which all other true doctrines are built, without which, religion cannot subsist, and of which no christian can be innocently ignorant. These are stiled, “ the first principles of the oracles of God, the principles of the doctrine of Christ, and the foundation*.” In modern language they are called the *fundamentals* of religion; the doctrines wherein christianity itself consists, in opposition to those of the several other sects or parties of christians. These fundamental doctrines are in scripture perpetually insisted upon, and inculcated, as those on which the whole of religion depends, and the teaching or preaching of these doctrines, is what St. *Paul* calls, laying the foundation “ according to the grace of God, which is given unto me; as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon; for other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ†.” That is, no man can make any thing else to be fundamental in religion, beside what Christ himself hath made so. “ If any man build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones;” if he preaches the true doctrine of the gospel, and builds thereupon virtuous practice, “ he shall receive a reward.” But if he corrupts the doctrine of Christ in its essentials, and

* Heb. 5. 12. 6. 1. † Heb. 6 1. 1 Cor. 3. 10, 14, 15.

and teaches men any vicious practice, he shall be punished very severely. If he builds “wood, hay, stubble”, that is teaches needless and useless, tho’ not vicious doctrines, he shall suffer loss, and in great part lose his reward; nevertheless for the sincerity of his intention, “he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire,” that is, he shall with difficulty be saved, as it were out of the fire; or *by pulling them out of the fire*, Jude 23.

And as the word *foundation* is sometimes applied to doctrines fundamental, so it is also applied to persons. Thus, “ye are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the lamb*.” Jesus Christ himself is the chief corner stone, the apostles and prophets are the foundation, and the church, or entire number of good men through all ages, are the whole building or spiritual temple of God; “in which ye also, says the apostle, as living stones are builded together for an habitation of God, through the spirit†.” And such persons as after the first preaching of the gospel, were in a more eminent manner, promoters of true religion, are after the same figure called *pillars*. “James, Cephas, and John who seemed to be pillars.” And “him that overcometh, will I make a pillar in the temple of my God||.” Which passages by the way, teach us to rectify a mistake, in the vulgar interpretation of St. Paul’s words. “That thou mayest know how to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of truth‡.” That St. Paul should in the same sentence call the church the house of God, and also a pillar, which is only part of that house, is very hard to conceive. From the forecited places there-

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* Ephes. 2. 20. Rev. 21. 14. † 1 Pet. 2. 5. || Gal. 2. 9. Rev. 3. 12. ‡ 1 Tim. 3. 15.

fore, and others of the like import, where the same word is always applied to single *persons*, it seems very probable, that here also it ought to be understood, not of the whole church, but only of one person, even of *Timothy* himself; "that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God;" that is, how to behave therein in such a manner, as being, or that thou mayest be a *pillar* and an eminent support of the truth. This sense is most reasonable and agreeable to other places of scripture, and removes a difficult expression, much abused and perverted by popish writers, to support their absurd doctrine of infallibility.

Having thus at large explained from its first original the nature and meaning, the ground and reason, of that metaphor or figure of speaking, which in the text and many other places of scripture, is used with great propriety and elegance, in the description of the church of Christ; it will be from hence very easy to understand the true sense of our saviour's words, *thou art Peter, a rock*, as thy name signifies, *and upon this rock will I build my church*. The church is the city, the house or building of God. In this scriptural temple of God, "Jesus Christ himself is the chief corner stone, in whom the whole building is fitly framed together, and the apostles and prophets are the foundation." Among these St. *Peter*, having with a particular forward zeal, made confession of his believing Christ to be the *Messiah*, was accordingly approved by his master, and receives the following answer from our Lord; *thou shalt be one principal foundation in my building*. By thy firmness, steadiness, courage, constancy and zeal in this confession, thou shalt become an eminent *founder* of my church, a most successful preacher of my doctrine to the world, in the first age of the gospel; *thou art Peter, thou art a rock,*
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and upon this rock will I build my church. It follows, *and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.* That is, opposition and persecution even unto death, shall never be able to stop the progress of my gospel. The word which we render hell, in the original, does not signify, the state of the damned, but that invisible state in general, to which death is the gate or passage, so that the phrase in the text imports the same as, *the gates of the grave, the chambers of death, and the gates of death.* Thus “ I shall go to the gates of the grave, the way to hell going down to the chambers of death, they draw near unto the gates of death*.” When therefore our saviour promises that the gates of hell, or of death, shall not prevail against his church; his meaning plainly is the same as in these other promises; “ Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world; where two or three are gathered together in my name (when and wheresoever in any age of the world) there am I in the midst of them†.” Our saviour adds in the words next following the text, “ and I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever *thou* shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever *thou* shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” That is, thou *Peter* shalt first open the kingdom of the *Messiah*, by publishing the gospel to the gentiles||, and by the terms of that doctrine which I commission you to preach on earth, shall every man’s sentence be finally and judiciously determined of God in heaven.

Having distinctly explained the full meaning of our saviour’s discourse to St. *Peter*, we may from hence observe, that it makes no real difference in the sense of the word, whether by the *rock* upon

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* *Isaiah*. 38, 10. *Prov.* 7. 27. *Job*. 38. 17. *Psal.* 107. 18. † *Mat.* 28. 20, 18, 10. || *Acts* 2. 10. and chap. 15.

which our saviour here promises to build his church, be meant the confession of *St. Peter*, as protestant expositors generally understand it; or the person of *St. Peter*, as the *Romish* writers contend; because, if this *rock* means the *confession* of *St. Peter*, yet the application of the phrase to him in so particular a manner, must be on account of his personal firmness and steadiness in that confession; or, if the *rock* means the person of *St. Peter*, this is still with regard to his firmness in that confession; so that nothing from hence can be collected to the advantage of the church of *Rome*. For I have proved that the word *rock*, the foundation stone of a building, a strong or well laid support, is not an emblem of authority, power, or dominion, as the church of *Rome* supposes; but it signifies a firm and constant, effectual and successful preaching of the gospel at the beginning, which was the foundation of the church of Christ; which church, the scripture tells us, was built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, and in that foundation, *St. Peter* was a *rock*, a firm and eminent part of it.

It is farther observable, that immediately after our Lord had said these great things to *St. Peter*, and no doubt that it might be left upon record as a guard against that extravagant opinion, which he foreknew future ages would entertain of *St. Peter's* personal authority; he then takes occasion in his very next discourse with him, to rebuke him with a sharper severity than he had ever before used to any of his disciples." "Get thee behind me, satan; thou art an offence unto me, for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men, v. 22. And probably for the same reason he was suffered to fall and deny his master more shamefully than any of the other disciples; as also that it is recorded, how *St. Paul* afterwards *withstood him*

to the face, because he was to be blamed*. And of the like nature seems to be our saviour's speaking with small respect of the blessed virgin; "woman what have I to do with thee? yea, rather blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it; and who is my mother, and who are my brethren? Behold, whosoever shall do the will of my father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, sister and mother."

And as the word *rock* signifies nothing of authority or dominion, but a stone or firm part in the foundation on which the church is built; so it is a character in which St. Peter could not possibly have any successors, in any other sense, than in that wherein he himself applies it to all christians in general, *ye also as living stones are built upon a spiritual house unto God†*. And you also are builded together, upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, into an holy temple, *for an habitation of God through the spirit*. So that what is here said to St. Peter is elsewhere applied equally to all the apostles. The city of God saith St. John, had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the lamb. The church was built equally upon them all, and our saviour expressly charged them, that there should be no such thing as dominion or preheminance amongst them; but *whosoever*, says he, *will be great among you, let him be your servant‡*. And what is here spoken of St. Peter's having the keys of the kingdom of heaven, is elsewhere expressly directed to all the apostles, *whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained§*. The meaning of which expression is, that not even the apostles themselves, much less any of their infallible successors, had a discretionary power to forgive or retain men's sins; but that they were appointed preachers and messengers of that gra-

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* Gal. 2. 11. † 1 Pet. 2. 5. Eph. 2. 22. ‡ Mat. 23. 11. § John 20. 23.

cious covenant of reconciliation, according to the terms and conditions whereof God will either forgive men's sins or not. God will judge men *according to our gospel*, or by the rule of that doctrine, which we are commanded to preach to the world. St. Paul expresses this with the greatest exactness. *In the day*, says he, *when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my Gospel**. I shall conclude this discourse in the words of a learned divine.

“† The pretended supremacy of the pope, is a meer tyranny and usurpation. Their arguing from St. Peter's supremacy over the apostles, to that of the pope over the church, is groundless and vain, for St. Peter himself had no such supremacy. He might be indeed prime, or chief of the apostles in some respects, as in personal worth or excellence; in reputation and esteem; and perhaps as a consequence of both, in order and precedency; but all this infers not authority, command, power, or jurisdiction, and that he had none over them is evident. If he had, it cannot be conceived, but that a point of such vast importance would have been not only delivered in scripture, but delivered in the plainest and strongest expressions; and particularly, that the highest titles would have been given to St. Peter; such as arch-apostle, supreme of the apostles, or the like. We should have had an account of at least one appeal made to him, or of one doubt or dispute, (as there were some among the apostles) determined and decided by him. In short of some act or other denoting this supremacy, and paramount jurisdiction. Whereas there is not one word of all this in scripture, but a great deal against it.”

“He himself is so far from asserting any such power, as he ought to have done, had he been invested

* Rom. 2. 16. † *Trap's popery truly stated*, p. 70, &c.

vested with it, that he in effect disclaims it. *The elders which are among you I exhort, who also am an elder**. He exhorts, not commands. He also is an elder as others are, in the original it is co-elder. It is true, a governor may exhort a subject, but then he commands too. But where do we find *St. Peter's* commands to his fellow apostles, or indeed to any body else? A bishop calls his presbyters brethren; but he also exercises authority over them. Where does *St. Peter act thus* over the other apostles? Our saviour gave them their commission jointly and equally; "go ye, and teach all nations, and receive ye the holy ghost; whatsoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; whosesoever sins ye retain, they are retained." *St. Paul* asserts, that he is inferior to none of the apostles, and much more is said of him, than of *St. Peter*, as that *the care of all the churches* daily lay upon him. *He ordained in all churches†*. If there was any supreme apostle, one would think *St. Paul* and not *St. Peter* was the man. But our saviour was so far from conferring supremacy upon any one of the apostles, that when there was a strife amongst them, he said, "He that is greatest amongst you, let him be as the younger, and he that is chief, as he that doth serve‡." And "whosoever will be great, or chief, let him be your minister," your servant. In fact, *St. Peter* never arrogated that authority to himself, which the *Romanists* would fasten upon him; so far from it, that he submitted to authority. They that were of the circumcision called him to an account in the case of *Cornelius*§. And he laid before them the reasons of his conduct in that affair; he was by *St. Paul* "withstood to the face, because he was to be blamed," and upon a special emergency, he was

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* 1 Pet. 5. 1. † 2 Cor. 11. 28. 1 Cor. 7. 17.

‡ Luke 21. 25, 26. Mat. 20. 26. 27. § Acts 11. 8, Gal. 2. 11. 14.

deputed as a delegate or messenger, by the synod of apostles, whose authority therefore was manifestly superior to his."

To our arguments from scripture against St. *Peter's* supremacy, no greater strength can be added, than the weakness of theirs for it, such proofs as were surely never heard of; our saviour said to that great apostle, "thou art *Peter*, and upon this *rock* I will build my church." By this *rock* many of the ancient fathers and learned writers, and one of them too a pope, understood not the person, but the confession and faith of St. *Peter*. Thus did St. *Chrysostom*, *Theodoret*, *Origen*, and pope *Gregory* the great. Some interpret it of our saviour himself; but supposing St. *Peter's* person is the rock here meant, yet the metaphor of a *rock* imports nothing of jurisdiction, it means stability and support, not authority; and whatever be intended by it, the same is said of all the apostles, as well as of St. *Peter*. Tho' our saviour in this place had a peculiar reason to mention him particularly, viz. for the noble confession which he had just made, yet we are assured by St. *Paul*, that the church is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." Besides, no supremacy over the apostles can possibly be inferred from those words of our saviour to St. *Peter*, because the apostolic office was constituted, and the apostles chosen, before those words were spoken, therefore could not in virtue of them, be built or founded upon him."

Their next argument is in effect the same, from these words of our saviour, "and I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven*." But did this give him a supremacy over the apostles? Did he with those keys admit them into the kingdom of heaven, that is the church, who were already

* Mat. 16. 19.

ready admitted into it, being long before *called* and *chosen* by our saviour himself? And as to the power of *binding* and *loosening*, that is given to all the apostles*. Their last argument is, that our saviour said to *Peter*, *feed my Sheep*; but was he therefore supreme over the apostles? Does feeding the sheep imply supremacy over the other shepherds? Were not all the apostles to feed their lord's sheep as well as St. *Peter*? Nay, is it not the office of all christian ministers, both inferior and superior, in all ages of the world? Their arguments taken from St. *Peter's* walking on the sea, from his miraculous draught of fishes, and many others, are too frivolous to be considered. For there is scarce any thing remarkable which he did or suffered, or that happened to him, but they urge as an argument of his supremacy. "To be even with them, says the learned *Barrow*†, I might assert the primacy of St. *John*; and to that purpose might alledge his prerogatives, (which indeed seem greater than those of St. *Peter*) namely, that he was the beloved disciple; that he leaned on our lord's breast; that St. *Peter* not presuming to ask our Lord a question, desired *him* to do it, as having a more special confidence with our lord; that St. *John* did higher service to the church, and all posterity, by writing not only more epistles, but also a most divine gospel, and a sublime prophecy, concerning the state of the church; that St. *John* did out-run *Peter*, and came first to the sepulchre; (in which passages such acute devisers would find out marvellous significancy;) that he out-lived all the apostles, and thence was most fit to be universal pastor. But whatever be the sense of the above cited texts, it cannot be that which the *Romanists* put upon them. Because our saviour elsewhere, as we have seen, forbids all affectation of primacy among his apostles; nor could the apostles

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* Mat. 18. 18. † On the pope's supremacy. p. 66. 52.

understand them so, because the whole tenour of their writings and actions declare the contrary."

To what has been said from scripture, I will add one argument from reason, as urged by the last excellent author. "If *St. Peter* had been appointed sovereign of the church, it seemeth that it should have been requisite, that he should have out-lived all the apostles. For *otherwise*, either the church must have wanted a head; or there must have been an inextricable controversy, *who that head was?* *St. Peter* died long before *St. John*, and perhaps before diverse others of the apostles; now, after his departure did the church want a head? then it might be-fore, and after have *none*, and our adversaries lose the main ground of their pretence. Did one of the apostles become head? which of them was it? Upon what ground did he assume the headship? Or who conferred it on him? Who ever acknowledged any such, or where is there any report about it? Was any other person (not an apostle) made head?—Suppose the bishop of *Rome*, who only pretended thereto, then did *St. John* and the other apostles, become subject to one in degree inferior to them; if so, what becomes of *St. Paul's* first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers? What do all the apostolical privileges come to, when *St. John* must be at the command of *Linus*, *Cletus* and *Clemens*, and I know not who? Was it not a great absurdity for the apostles to truckle under to the pastors and teachers of *Rome*." And if there was no other argument against the pope's supremacy, as there are many unanswerable ones, this alone is sufficient to determine the whole controversy."

"The same learned writer * has largely shewn, that the primitive fathers, and the whole church of Christ, for many, and those the purest ages, never dreamt of this supremacy in *St. Peter*, for which our adver-

* Barrow.

adversaries contend. Some of them indeed give him very high titles; but then they give as high, or higher to other apostles, especially St. *John*, St. *James* and St. *Paul*; of which last particularly, St. *Chrysostom* says, *none was greater than he; yea, none equal to him*: and pope Gregory I. says of him, that he was made head of the nations, because he obtained, *principatum totius ecclesiæ*, the principality of the whole church. Hence one would think, that if there was any such monarch among the apostles, as our adversaries contend for, St. *Paul*, not St. *Peter*, should be the man; and that in the judgment of one of the most illustrious popes, the church of *Rome* has to boast of. But,

“ Suppose St. *Peter* had such a supremacy, as we have proved he had not, yet what is that to the popes or bishops of *Rome*? Why, say they, St. *Peter* was pope or bishop of *Rome*, and consequently his successors are. But this fact was never yet proved, nay, there is very strong, almost demonstrative proofs of the contrary. But suppose St. *Peter* was supreme, and also bishop of *Rome*, it by no means follows, that he who succeeds a man in his bishoprick, succeeds him in every thing else; not in his estate, if he had any. There is a great difference between a successor and an heir; nor does an heir succeed him whose heir he is, in all things; not in his personal accomplishments, powers, offices, &c. Supposing then, St. *Peter* bishop of *Rome*, but he was also an apostle; does it thence follow, that the next bishop of *Rome* was an apostle? and so downwards. So that whatever eminency he had, it was either personal, or belonged to him as an apostle, and consequently did not descend to the bishops of *Rome*, by virtue of their succeeding him as such.”

“ Lastly,

“ Lastly, it is notorious and evident from the whole stream of history, and the writings of the ancients, that in fact no supremacy of the pope was ever heard of, or pretended to, till about six hundred years after Christ. That the bishop of *Rome* was till then, regarded as upon an equal foot, in point of jurisdiction with other bishops; witness among many other instances, the behaviour of *St. Cyprian*, and *Firmilian*, to pope *Stephen*; the two first charging the last with insolence, arrogance, falsehood and treachery. That diverse popes were anathematized and excommunicated, as *Liberius* and *Honorius*. Are these things consistent with the pope's supremacy, and universal monarchy over christendom? Indeed, great honours were justly paid to the see of *Rome*, because that city had for so many ages been the seat of the empire. But honour and precedency is one thing; jurisdiction or authority, much more supremacy, is quite another. Till the beginning of the seventh century, the title of universal bishop was never pretended to by any one; nay, pope *Gregory I.* commonly called the *great*, about that time, grievously complained of *John* patriarch of *Constantinople* for assuming it; and pronounced him the forerunner of antichrist, who should arrogate such a title to himself; and yet that pope's next successor but one, *Boniface III.* laid claim to it, and had it conferred upon him, by that monster of villany *Phocas*, who, from a plebeian made himself emperor, having murdered his master the emperor *Mauritius*, with his wife and children. This was the man, who first gave the title of *oecumenical*, or universal bishop, to the pope of *Rome*; as it is natural for one tyrant and usurper to countenance the pretension of another. What has been briefly said, may suffice to shew, that the pope's supremacy is a gross usurpation.”

“ As

“ As for those who maintain it in a limited sense, their notion labours with insuperable difficulties and inconsistencies. For we may ask them concerning the pope’s authority, as our saviour did the *Jews* as to *John’s* baptism; is it *from heaven or of men*? If of men, the arguments from scripture are at an end, and the boasted divine right is become a human one. If from heaven; what power upon earth can limit a divine authority? or where has the scriptures set bounds to it? for nothing else can. Either then the arguments from scripture are good and conclusive; or they are not. If they are not; there is an end of the divine authority, which is contrary to the present supposition. If they are; let them shew us how, or where, those scriptures which gave the pope any supremacy have limited that supremacy; no text is so much as pretended for this limitation; so that the pope is either supreme in the highest sense, or not at all;” and that he is so in *no sense*, has been evidently proved.

DIS-

DISCOURSE VII. Abp. Tillotson.

The knowledge of the scriptures, necessary
to salvation.

Matt. 23. 13.

Woe unto you scribes and pharisees, hypocrites ; for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men ; for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entring to go in.

THE scribes so often mentioned in the gospel, were the great doctors among the Jews, the teachers and interpreters of the law of God. These men were of chief authority in the Jewish church, who “ made all the commandments of God of none effect by their traditions.” They assumed *infallibility*, and branded all who opposed them, with the odious name of heretics ; against these, our saviour denounceth his woe, as in the text. By “ shutting up the kingdom of heaven against men, and taking away the key of knowledge,” our saviour means, that the scribes and teachers of the law, under a pretence of interpreting the scriptures, did pervert them, and kept the true knowledge of them from the people ; especially, the prophecies of the old testament concerning the messiah ; and thus shut up the kingdom of heaven against men, by keeping them in ignorance of the scriptures, and preventing them from embracing our saviour’s doctrine, and entring into the kingdom of heaven.

Knowledge is necessary to the very being, life, and practice of religion, “ without faith, it is impossible

Disc. VII. *The knowledge of the scriptures, &c.* 91

possible to please God." Because, as faith is an act of the understanding, it necessarily supposes some knowledge and apprehension of what we believe. For without knowledge, there can be no devotion to God, no obedience to his laws. We must first know God, before we can worship him, and understand his will, before we can obey it; and yet there are some who cry up ignorance, as the mother of devotion. The papists expressly reckon ignorance among the *parents of religion* *. And can any thing more disparage religion, than to derive it, from so ignoble an original; to make what the scripture calls the "beginning of wisdom, and the excellency of knowledge," to be the offspring of ignorance, the child of darkness? Ignorance indeed may be the mother of folly and superstition. But surely, religion is of a nobler extraction; it is the result of the best wisdom and knowledge, and descends from the giver of every good and perfect gift, even the father of lights.

And as knowledge in general is necessary to religion, so in particular, the knowledge of the holy scriptures is necessary to our eternal salvation, because these contain the standing revelations of God to men; wherein the nature of God, and of his will concerning our duty, and the terms and conditions of our eternal happiness, are fully and plainly declared to us. The scriptures are the word of God, the great instrument of our happiness; and are "able to make men wise unto salvation;" and is it not necessary, that every one should have this wisdom, and the free use of that book, which will perfectly instruct him, what he must believe, and do, that he may be saved?

How in excusable then must it be, to keep men in ignorance of religion, and to deprive them of
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* *Rusworth's dialogues.*

so necessary a means of divine knowledge, as that of the holy scriptures? This our saviour calls, “taking away the key of knowledge, and shutting the kingdom of heaven against men.” For this he denounceth a terrible woe against the teachers of the *Jewish* church. It is a horrid impiety to give men a false sense and interpretation of scripture, but much greater to forbid them the reading of it; which is to stop knowledge at the fountain head. And can there be a greater sacrilege, than to rob men of the word of God, the best means of acquainting them with the will of God and their duty, and the way to eternal happiness? To keep the people in ignorance of what is necessary to save them, is maliciously to contrive the eternal ruin and destruction of their souls. To lock up the scriptures and the service of God, from the people in an unknown tongue, is in effect to forbid men to know God and to serve him; and is not this to shut the kingdom of heaven against men, and a most barbarous cruelty to the souls of men? Is not this the surest way “to destroy those for whom Christ died, and to thwart the design of God our saviour, who would have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth?”

The best things have their inconveniences, and are liable to be abused; but surely men are not to be ruined and damned, for fear of abusing their knowledge, or to prevent some inconveniences; for this is to cross the very end and design of the scriptures; which were “written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope*.” All scripture is given by inspiration of God; and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” St. Paul here expressly tells the church of *Rome*, that the scriptures were written for

* Rom. 15. 4. & Tim. 3. 16.

for their learning; and if they are so useful and profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for instruction in righteousness; why may they not be used by the people, for those ends for which God gave them? Though there may be many difficulties and obscurities in the scriptures, enough to exercise the skill of the learned, yet they are neither useless nor dangerous to the people. *St. Chrysostome* says, that "whatever things are necessary are manifest in the scriptures." And *St. Austin*, "that all things are plain in the scripture, which concern faith and a good life; and that those things which are necessary to the salvation of men, are not so hard to be come at; but that as to those things which the scripture plainly contains, it speaks without disguise, like a familiar friend, to the heart of the learned and unlearned." The fathers in their orations and homilies do frequently exhort the people, to be conversant in the holy scriptures, to read them daily, diligently and attentively; and I challenge our adversaries to produce one ancient father, who discourages the people from reading the scriptures, much less to forbid them. And if they have the schoolmen on their side, yet they have not one father, neither scripture, nor antiquity in their favour. With great reason then does our saviour denounce so heavy a woe against such teachers. And God did severely threaten the priests of the *Jewish* church, for not instructing the people, in the knowledge of him; "my people are destroyed for want of knowledge; because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee; thou shalt be no more a priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children *." Whoever shall perish for want of knowledge, by being deprived of the necessary means of salvation, their destruction will be charged

* *Hosea* 4. 6.

ed upon those, “ who have taken away the key of knowledge, and shut the kingdom of heaven against men.”

The woe here denounced against the scribes and pharisees, falls equally heavy upon the pastors and teachers of the *Roman* church; who have taken away the key of knowledge, not only by depriving the people of the right understanding of the scriptures, but of the very use of them. This tyranny that church hath exercised for several hundred years; about the ninth and tenth centuries, when gross ignorance covered this part of the world, the pope and the priests took away the key of knowledge for several ages; till the reformation opened a way for it again. I seriously profess, that there is scarce any thing more astonishing, than this cruel usage of the church of *Rome*; and I know not which most to wonder at, the insolence of their governors in imposing upon men this senseless way of serving God; or the patience, if not stupidity of the people, in being so intolerably abused. For why should reasonable creatures be treated, as if they were unworthy to be acquainted with the will of God; and as if that which every man ought to do, was not fit for every man to know. But to be more particular. There are two things we charge the papists with, which they cannot deny. The one is their performing the public service of God in an unknown tongue; the other is their depriving the people of the use of the scriptures.

As to the worshipping of God in an unknown tongue, *St. Paul* hath a whole chapter* on purpose to shew how unreasonable, and contrary this is, to the edification of christians. “ It is wonderful, says *Erasmus*, how the custom of the church is altered in this; *St. Paul* had rather speak five words with understanding, and so as to teach others, than

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* 1 Cor. 14.

ten thousand in an unknown tongue." And how dares the church of *Rome* not to follow so great an authority? And as to the practice of the ancient church, *Origen* tells us, "that the *Grecians* in their prayers used the *Greek*, and the *Romans* the *Latin* tongue; and so every one according to his language prayeth unto God, and praiseth him." Indeed, for the first six hundred years after Christ, the service of God was always performed in a known tongue. This the learned men of their own church do not deny. Cardinal *Cajetan* said, it was much better this custom was restored: and *Bellarmino* confesseth, that the *Armenians*, *Egyptians*, *Ethiopians*, *Russians*, and others, do use their own language in their liturgies. But as it is otherwise now in the church of *Rome*, and hath been for several ages; let us reason this matter calmly with them.

And if it be necessary for us to understand what we do in religion, and that prayer be one of the most solemn parts of it, as I think none can deny; why should not men understand their prayers, as well as other parts of religion? That people should understand their private prayers they allow; and why not the public also? Is there less religion in public prayers? Is God less honoured, or we less edified by them? Surely, no tolerable reason can be given, why people should not understand their public devotions, as well as their private. And if men cannot devoutly pray alone, without understanding what they ask of God; how can they devoutly join in public prayers made by the priest, without understanding what they are? the true question is, whether the people ought to be edified in the service of God, and that the church should order things contrary to edification? Now the service of God in an unknown tongue, is certainly useless and unprofitable to the people, nay, it is
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no public service of God, when the priest only understands it. For how can they be public prayers, unless the people join in them? But they cannot join in what they do not understand.

As to their depriving the people of the holy scriptures; our blessed saviour exhorts the *Jews* to search the scriptures; and St. *Paul's* command is, *that the word of God should dwell richly in them*: and the ancient fathers, do both frequently and earnestly recommend to the people the reading of the scriptures. Nor can there be any objections made against the people's reading of the scriptures now, but what would have held as well against the writing and publishing them at first, in a language understood by the people; as the old testament was by the *Jews*, the epistles of the apostles by the churches to whom they were written, and the gospels both by *Jews* and *Greeks*. For were there no difficulties and obscurities then in the scriptures, capable of being wrested by the unstable and unlearned? Were not people then liable to error, and in danger of heresy? And yet these are their great objections against putting the scriptures into the hands of the people. This is like their arguing against giving the cup to the laity, least some of the consecrated wine should be spilt upon their beards; as if errors and beards were inconveniences, to which mankind were not liable in the first ages of christianity.

But this reason, if any, makes as much against publishing the scriptures at first to the people, as permitting the use of them now. And in truth all these objections, would they speak out, are against the scripture itself. This is evident by the bishops counsel given to pope *Julius III.* at *Bononia*; "that by all means as little of the gospel as might be, especially in the vulgar tongue, should be read to the people; and that little which was

in the *mass*, ought to be sufficient; for so long as men were contented with that little, all things went well with them; but quite otherwise since more was commonly read." And speaking of the scriptures, say they, "this in short is that book, which above all others, hath raised those tempests and whirlwinds which we were almost carried away with; and in truth, if any one diligently considers it, and compares it with what is done in our church, he will find them very contrary to each other, and our doctrine not only to be very different from it, but repugnant to it." If this be the case, it is no wonder they are against the scriptures, when the scriptures are so clearly against them. But surely no considerate person would be of that church, who are forced to confess, that several of their doctrines and practices are very contrary to the word of God. However, I will now consider what the papists urge for themselves.

But indeed, what can be said to justify so audacious an affront to mankind, so great a tyranny and cruelty to the souls of men? Hath God forbidden the people to look into the scriptures? No, quite the contrary. Was it the ancient practice of the church to celebrate the service of God in an unknown tongue? Our adversaries dare not pretend this. But I will truly represent the substance of what they urge, as to these *two points*.

As to the service of God in an unknown tongue, they say, that the people exercising a general devotion, and coming with an intention to serve God, that is accepted, though they do not understand the prayers nor lessons. But does not St. *Paul* expressly require more than this in the service of God; namely, that the understanding of the people should be edified by the service that is performed? For he tells us, that if what is done be not understood, the people are not edified, nor

can say *Amen* to the prayers and thanksgivings, that are put up to God. — They further say, the prayers are to God who understands them, and that is enough. But how can men pray to God, without knowing what they ask of him? Is not prayer a reasonable service, as well as part of the christian worship? And can any service be reasonable, that is not understood, and accompanied with our hearts and affections? and even as to the lessons and exhortations of scripture, which are also read to the people in an unknown tongue, and are directed to them for their instruction, and not to God; Can men be instructed by what they do not understand? Or is not this concealing from the people what they ought to learn? Lastly, they say it is convenient, that God should be served and worshipped in the same language throughout the world; convenient, for whom, God, or the people? Not for God surely, who understands all languages; not for the people, who generally understand none but their own; and it must be very inconvenient, if they understand not what they do in God's service.

As to their depriving the people of the scriptures, they pretend, that the church can give leave to men to read the scriptures. But then there must be a licence for this, under the hand of the bishop or inquisitor, by the advice of the priest or confessor, concerning the fitness of the person; and to be sure, none are fit, but such as they can confide in; and whoever acts otherwise, is to be denied absolution; which is to damn men so far as they can, for presuming to read the word of God, without their leave. And as to their own instruction of the people, this is very sparingly and slightly done; their sermons are generally made up of feigned stories and miracles of saints, with exhortations to the worship of them, and of their
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images and relicks, in particular the blessed virgin. For the truth of this I appeal to the innumerable volumes of their sermons and posills in print ; and though they allow the people some catechisms and manuals of devotions; yet in many of them, they have the confidence to steal away the second commandment in the face of the eighth. But if those helps of instruction are agreeable to the scriptures, why are they so afraid the people should read the scriptures ? If they are not, why do they deceive and delude them ?

But say they, people are apt to wrest the scriptures to their own destruction, and which hath been the occasion of many heresies. It cannot be denied, that the best things in the world are liable to be abused; health, light, and liberty, as well as knowledge. But must these therefore be taken away ? St. *Peter* takes notice of people's wresting the scriptures to their own ruin, even in his days ; but he does not therefore forbid men to read them. Must not men know the truth, for fear of falling into error. In fact, heresies have not sprung from this cause ; but have generally been broached by the learned, from whom the scriptures could not be concealed ; and for the truth of this, I appeal to the history and experience of all ages. But if what they say be true, is not this to lay the blame of all the ancient heresies upon the ill-conduct of our saviour, his apostles, and the fathers of the church, for so many ages, and their imprudent dispensing of the scriptures to the people ? This consequence is unavoidable, nor can the church of *Rome* justify their present practice, without accusing all these.

*^c But let us examine this a little farther. *There are in the scriptures some things hard to be understood.* Therefore (say they) the people must not

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read

* Archbishop *Sharp*.

read them. But is this fair dealing? Because some things are hard to be understood, must they therefore be deprived of those that are plain, and which are abundantly more in number than the other? In truth, every one, however ignorant, is capable of receiving great advantages by reading, or hearing the scriptures read; they being the means which God hath appointed to *make us wise to salvation*. They are the instruments by which we come to the knowledge of the christian religion." And,

"It is much more probable, that an ignorant man, if sincere, who reads or hears the scriptures, will make a good use of them, than there is danger, that he will pervert them. Indeed, many readers or hearers may be ignorant of the meaning of some texts of scripture, or mistake them; but there is no great harm in this, either to themselves or others. For every mistake of a text of scripture, is not a *wresting of scripture to a man's destruction*. For wresting the scriptures, is to interpret them to serve a man's private turn; and to do this to his own destruction, is forcing them to favour some wicked unchristian doctrine or practice, that he hath espoused. So that though many good men may be sometimes mistaken in the meaning of the scriptures, yet none but bad men can wrest them to their own destruction. But however liable the scriptures are to be misconstrued, or abused by bad men, yet all things considered, it is more for the good of the world, that the use of them should be allowed to all persons (in regard most, if not all, are capable of receiving benefit from them) than that they should be forbidden, because some may wrest and abuse them to their own mischief, and the disturbance of others. There is nothing that God hath made but may, and too often is abused. But is it therefore better upon the whole, that the common use of God's good creatures should be laid aside, because it is liable to be abused,

bused, and that some men do thereby hurt themselves and others? Certainly no. For then all learning, all arts, all books as well as the bible; nay, those good creatures which God has made for the support and delight of our lives, must upon this principle be also forbidden to the generality of mankind. Thus much is sufficient to shew the unreasonableness of this popish doctrine. — I will now endeavour to convince you both of the lawfulness, and great obligation that is incumbent on all men, most diligently and frequently to read and study those holy books."

"Diligently to read the holy scriptures, is a thing recommended to us, both by the scriptures themselves, by the practice and advice of the most ancient and best christians, and by the reason of the thing itself. "Hear, O *Israel*, the words which I command thee this day, shall be in thy heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up*." How emphatically doth God here signify to his people, that it was his pleasure for all men, whether learned or unlearned, thoroughly to acquaint themselves with the word of God? and the reason of this precept concerns us, as much or more than it did the *Jews*. For if God required the *Israelites*, every soul of them, to read and learn the law of *Moses*, which was a carnal and temporary law, and to teach it their children; can less be expected from us christians, with respect to that everlasting spiritual law of the gospel, whereby alone all men are to expect salvation, and which was revealed by our lord Jesus, and his apostles, and conveyed down to us, by the scriptures of the new testament? Surely not."

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* Deut. 6. 4, 6, 7.

“ Our saviour, when he preached to the *Jews*, did not discourage them from reading the scriptures, but exhorts and bids them “ to search the scriptures, for in them they expected to have eternal life, and they were they that testified of them*.” And St. *Paul* commends *Timothy*, “ that from a child he had known the scriptures; which, *saith he*, are able to make a man wise to salvation.” And the *Bereans* are much applauded, and esteemed more worthy than those of *Thessalonica*, because they “ did daily examine the scriptures, and enquired whether St. *Paul*’s doctrine did agree with them or no†.” Nay, the eunuch who read the scriptures, though he did not understand them, yet God made it the means of his conversion to christianity; so ready is God to afford his assistance to those means he hath appointed, though under the most disadvantageous circumstances. Altho’ the scriptures I have here quoted, are from the old testament, and that because there were no others then extant; yet the reason of these texts, will hold as strongly for our now reading the new, as for the old testament at that time. Were the *Jews* commanded to *search the scriptures of the old testament*, because they testified of Christ, and were the means to convince them, that he was the true messiah; and is it not a duty as much incumbent on us, to search the scriptures of the new testament now, since they are the means appointed by God, to convey to us the doctrine and truth of the gospel? Were the scriptures of the old testament then able to *make men wise unto salvation*; and are not the old and new testament together, as much able to make us also wise unto salvation? Was *Timothy* commended, because from a child he had known the writings of *Moses* and the prophets; and is it less our duty to exercise our
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* John 5. 39. 2 Tim. 3. 15. † Acts. 17. Acts

selves in the study of what was taught by Christ and his apostles? Was God so ready to assist the pagan eunuch even in an extraordinary manner, though he read without understanding; and can we suppose he will deny his assistance, blessing and grace to us in an ordinary way, when we read the gospel of Christ, and are capable of understanding and receiving benefit from it?" But

"I proceed to shew the sense of the primitive and best christians, as to this matter, and how they both practised and advised the people's reading of the scriptures. Whoever is versed in ancient history, knows what a mighty value the first christians put upon the bible. They joyfully heard it read in their public assemblies, and diligently studied and meditated upon it in their own houses. They not only read, but got several portions of it by heart. They instructed their children in it, and who from their childhood enquired into the sense of them. St. Jerom tells us, *that they might hear the plowman in the fields at his hallelujahs; and the labourers in the vineyards, singing David's psalms; and that Paula's virgins, (a devout lady in those days) were not to pass over one day without learning some part of scripture.* Nay, such a veneration had the christians then for the bible, that they would rather part with their lives, than deliver it up to the pagans when they demanded it from them. Nor were the people in those days more forward to read and learn the scriptures, than the bishops and guides of the church were to exhort and encourage them to it. *Think it not sufficient, says St. Austin to the people, that ye hear the scriptures in the church, but also in your houses at home, either read them yourselves, or get some to read to you. Origen saith, would to God we would all do as is written, search the scriptures.*" And says St. Chrysostom, *hearken to me, ye laymen, ye men of*

the world ; get ye the bible, that most wholesome remedy of the soul. The reading the holy scriptures is in truth much more necessary for you than the monk. It was not then thought, that ignorance was the parent of devotion, or that the scriptures were too dangerous to be trusted in the hands of unlearned persons. It was not then imagined, that reading the bible, would make men heretics or schismatics. For they thought it the best expedient in the world to make men good christians, peaceable subjects, and hearty lovers of one another, and therefore did advise, exhort, and encourage every man to be frequent, diligent and serious in reading and studying of this best of books."

" And very great cause had they thus to commend the scriptures, to the careful perusal of every christian. For in the reason of the thing, the holy scriptures above all other books in the world, do recommend themselves to the diligent study of all good christians. They are the noblest, the most useful and profitable for all orders, degrees, sexes, ages, and conditions of christians, to spend their days in reading and meditating upon. For here only we have the measures of all God's wisdom and knowledge in the redemption of the world by our lord *Jesus*, discovered to mankind. Here only we have the authentic declarations of God's mercy to us, and of the terms upon which we may obtain eternal life. Here we have both the matter of our faith, and the evidence for the truth of it. Here are to be found the knowledge of our duty, and directions for the practice of it. Here are contained the valuable promises that God hath made to mankind in Christ *Jesus*, and the wonderful encouragement he hath given to all penitent and returning sinners. Here are those affectionate invitations and hearty persuasives of God to men, to oblige them to love him, and to be eternally.

eternally happy, as is enough to make us amazed and astonished, at the infinite condescensions of the divine goodness. And here are those powerful motives to be good and happy, to love God, to love virtue and our own souls, that one would wonder, how any human creatures can be so foolish, stupid, and insensible, as not to be persuaded thereby to become so holy and happy, as God would have them. In a word, as in the bible are to be found all things that are either needful, useful, or delightful to a good man, let all judge, whether this be not a book proper and necessary to be read and studied by all persons? An indispensable duty this, and which whoever is remiss and careless in, will sin against God, and neglect the eternal concerns of his own soul."

"Let me therefore seriously persuade all persons to be diligent and constant in reading the holy scriptures. Let it be the care of our lives, and the delight of our minds to read and meditate on them; so that so every one of us may feel the effects of that love, esteem and zeal we have for them. Let us teach them to our children, and to our servants, and heartily recommend them to all others. Let us always speak of them, hear, and read them, with the greatest reverence, humility and attention; and let us all be careful to do this, that we may receive the benefits thereof."

DISCOURSE VIII. Bp. Patrick.

Of Tradition.

2 *Thessalonians* 2. 15.

Therefore brethren stand fast and hold the traditions, which ye have been taught, whether by word or our epistle.

AS all christians are obliged to believe and obey the whole will of God, revealed by Christ Jesus, it concerns every one who would be saved, to enquire where the intire will of God is to be found, that he may conform himself thereto ; nor would this be very difficult to be discovered, did not the worldly interests of men, make that intricate and perplexed, which is otherwise plain and easy. For the repeating of the apostles creed at baptism, and of that alone, as a summary of that faith, whose sincere profession entitles us to the grace there conferred, justifies the doctrine of the church of *England* in its sixth article, that “ the holy scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation ; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite and necessary to salvation.” But as this condemns many of the *Romish* doctrines, which are not to be found in, nor countenanced by the holy scriptures, the papists pretend, that “ the faith once delivered to the saints,” mentioned by St. *James*, is not entirely delivered in the scripture, but we must seek for the rest in the traditions of the church ; which are

are to be received with the same regard that we do the holy scriptures. Hence they urge, that they follow but we forsake tradition. It may be therefore very proper to inform all such as are not willing to be deceived, what they are to believe concerning tradition.

This word in general signifies some matter, that is delivered unto another; and among christians, the doctrine of our religion, delivered by Christ, and this either by writing, or word of mouth; so that the scriptures may in this sense be called traditions. But custom hath distinguished tradition from scripture, or at least from the holy writings, and made it signify that which is not delivered in the holy scriptures. For though the scriptures are in fact the first tradition, as being the fountain of all true antiquity; yet now in common language by traditions we mean, such ancient doctrines as are conveyed to us, either by word of mouth from generation to generation, or by human writings not of the same authority with the holy scriptures.

And that we may judge rightly of such traditions, it will be proper to consider, both the authors, and the matter of them; also their authority, and why we ought to believe them. As all traditions not contained in the scriptures suppose some author, from whence they originally come, it is necessary before we believe them, to enquire who first delivered such tradition; that we may judge what credit is to be given to them, on account of the authors. Thus whatever is delivered to us in christianity, comes either from Christ, or his apostles, or from the church in general, or some of its private divines. For there is now no tradition in the christian world, but what proceeds from one or more of the four originals before-mentioned.

And the matter which they deliver to us must either concern that faith and good life, which are necessary to salvation; or what belongs to opinions, rites, ceremonies, customs, and things of order or decency. Both which may be conveyed by, or without writing, either divine or human; and yet neither can have any authority but from the credit of their respective authors. If it be concerning matters divine, then their authority must be divine; if only human, their authority can be no more, and that will have greater or lesser weight, according to the credit of such authors.

Whatever therefore appears plainly to come from Christ, must have the highest authority, and ought to be received with absolute submission, because he is the son of God; whatever also has been certainly delivered by the apostles in his name, hath the same authority; they being his ministers sent by him, as he was by God his father, and endued with divine power, to give testimony to their mission; in like manner, whatever is delivered by the church, hath the same authority with the church; which though not equal to the two former, (the church having no such divine power, nor infallible judgment as the apostles had) yet is of much weight and moment, and ought to be revered next to theirs. I mean the sense of the whole church, and which must be of greater or lesser authority, as it was nearer or more remote from the apostles times; what was delivered by their immediate followers, or the next generation, ought to have the greatest human authority, as being little less than divine. But what has been delivered in later times, hath less human authority, or even none at all; especially, if it contradicts the sense of the church, when it was better acquainted with the mind of Christ and his apostles.

As for particular churches, their authority ought to be revered in what they determine not contrary to God's word. But any private divine, ancient or modern, can have no greater authority than his own, and that in proportion, as he was more or less learned and truly religious; add to all this, that it ought plainly to appear, that such doctrines do really come from such authors whose traditions they pretend to be. The great question among sober and judicious persons is, how we can be sufficiently assured, that any thing which is not contained in the scriptures doth certainly come from Christ or his apostles? For all agree, that whatever was delivered by Christ from God, or by the apostles from Christ, is to be embraced and firmly retained, whether written or not, if it certainly came from him or them. What is contained in the holy scripture, hath not its authority because written, but because it came from God; whatever Christ said, we ought to believe, let the means of conveying it be what they will. But the great difficulty is, how we can be certain, at this distance of time, that what is not recorded in the holy scripture, was ever said by Christ? This is matter of such importance, that no man ought to believe it without very good evidence; because many doctrines may be falsely ascribed to Christ and his apostles, which never came from them; but had their original from some particular church, or private divine in it; unto whose authority we are not to pay any other reverence, than what the scripture will warrant. For the greater satisfaction therefore of all who would be rightly informed, I will briefly shew what traditions we do own and receive, and what we with very good reason ought to refuse and reject.

And first we acknowledge, that what is now holy scripture, was once tradition, properly so called.

called, I mean a doctrine delivered by word of mouth. We all agree, that the whole Gospel of Christ, was once unwritten, when it was preached by our Saviour and his apostles. But the *Romish* church, insist that the words of St. Paul*, “therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle;” mean things not written, but delivered by word of mouth, which the *Thessalonians* were commanded to hold. In answer to this, it should be observed, what the traditions are, of which the apostle here writes, and when it was that they were partly unwritten; and it is manifest that he means by traditions here, the doctrines we now read in the holy scriptures. For the word *therefore* is plainly an inference, from what he had just before said. The apostle had been treating of the grand doctrines of the gospel, or the way of salvation revealed by Christ, from God the father, who, saith he †, “hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the spirit, and belief of the truth, whereunto he hath called you.” &c. That is, this is the sum of the gospel, and whatsoever he had delivered unto them about their sanctification, faith, or salvation, by obtaining the glory of our lord Jesus Christ, to which they were chosen and called; this he exhorts them to hold fast; whether it was contained in this epistle, or in his former preaching, he having then no occasion to write what he had before delivered by word of mouth.

As to the time *when* some things remained unwritten, which were afterwards reduced to writing, this was when this epistle was sent to the *Thessalonians*. For then some things concerning their salvation, were not contained in this letter, having as yet been delivered only by word of mouth unto *that*

* 2 Thess. 2. 15.

† Verse 13. 14.

that church. For it does not follow, that all churches were at that time, without the doctrine of the gospel compleatly written; because some traditions or doctrines among the *Thessalonians* were as yet unwritten in that church. Nay, they had afterwards more communicated to them in writing besides this epistle or the former either, namely, all the gospels, the acts of the apostles, and other apostolical epistles, which we now enjoy. These writings contain the traditions which the apostle had delivered to the *Thessalonians* by word, such as what concerned the incarnation, birth, life, miracles, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ, the coming of the holy ghost, and mission of the apostles, and whatever else is there recorded for our instruction. It is therefore absurd to argue from these words, that we are now to follow some unwritten tradition, unless the apostle had said, "hold the traditions which ye have been taught by word," which *shall never be written*. So that it is endless to enquire after, or rely upon any such traditions when offered to us; except we knew there was something therein necessary to our salvation, which was not to be delivered in writing, and where we might as certainly find it, as what the apostles have committed to writing.

There is as little weight in this other text produced by them; "now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things, and keep the traditions, (or ordinances or precepts) as I delivered them unto you*." Now we do with the *Corinthians* keep the traditions as he delivered them, which the Roman church do not. For instance, what he had received of the Lord and delivered to them, was the whole communion in both kinds, the cup as well as the bread; this tradition we keep entire, as he delivered it to his church in this epistle, which is part of holy scripture;

* 1 Cor. 11. 2.

scripture; but instead of observing this divine tradition, and giving the communion of christ's body and blood, as St. *Paul* directed, the church of *Rome* keeps the cup from the people. Let then all judge who most strictly observes the apostolical tradition, we or the church of *Rome*. It would be endless to explain all the places of scripture, which they wrest to support their vain and invented traditions.

As to that word of God which being once unwritten, but is now written, this tradition we own, it being universal, continued, and undenied. But then this sort of tradition does not mean or signify the doctrine delivered to us, but the manner and means of its delivery. Should therefore papists urge in favour of their traditions, that scripture itself comes to us by tradition; this we do not deny, but thank God for it, because all christians agree, that we read the word of God when we read the scriptures; and we see no necessity for any other tradition, they being sufficient to make the man of God wise unto salvation. These holy writings were in the first ages, of such importance as to be kept with greater care than any other books, because the primitive christians thought the christian religion to be contained therein. The sum then of what may be necessary to observe, is that which Christ and his apostles first taught the church by word of mouth, and was afterwards by God's command committed to writing, and delivered to the church, to be the ground of our faith, we ought to believe; agreeably to the express words of St. *Irenæus*, "the gospel which they (*the apostles*) then preached, was afterwards by the will of God delivered unto us in the scriptures, to be in time to come the foundation and pillar of our faith." We also acknowledge, that the sum and substance of the christian religion contained in the holy writings, hath been delivered down to us, even from the apostles days.

in other ways and forms besides the scriptures; namely, in the baptismal vow, in the creed, prayers, and hymns of the church, which may be called traditions; but they deliver no new doctrine, only an abridgment of the same christianity recorded in the scriptures. We refuse no tradition of doctrines delivered by Christ or his apostles, nor of those who succeeded them, if not contrary to their writings. We submit to the decrees of the church in matters of order and decency; but we cannot receive that as a doctrine of Christ, which is only the tradition of man, nor observe any ordinances of the ancient church in matters of decency so unalterable, as never to vary from them, this being what they never intended; as evidently appears from the many changes made, in several things mentioned in scripture, being customs suited to those ages and countries. But I proceed to shew what traditions we do not receive.

And first, we do not believe there is any tradition, which contains another word of God, than what is in the scripture, or can be proved therefrom; not only because the scriptures testify to their own perfection, but because the constant tradition of the church, even that of ancient *Rome*, is, that in the scriptures we may find all things necessary to salvation; or otherwise they would have told us where, or how we should be better informed, of what was absolutely necessary for us to know. But the only certain rule for us to follow in this case, is, "to examine all traditions by the scripture, by the supreme rule of faith, and to admit only such as are agreeable thereto;" because the holy scriptures come to us with a full and ample testimony of their divine original, which cannot be said with any truth of the traditions obtruded on us by the church of *Rome*. For the primitive church had the first copies and authentic writings of the new testament de-

delivered to them by the apostles own hands, which confirm the scriptures of the old testament, and both were transmitted to posterity by the primitive church, who carefully kept them as the most precious treasure; so that this written word hath had the general approbation and testimony of the whole church of Christ, to this day, attesting its divinity. Nay, *Celsus*, *Porphry*, *Julian*, the great enemies of christianity, never questioned the apostle's being the authors of those writings ascribed to them. Besides, they carry in themselves a divine spirit, all tending to preserve in men a sense of God, and to make them truly virtuous.

But this cannot be said of those unwritten traditions, which the church of *Rome* pretend to be part of God's word. For we have no testimony of them in scripture, nor from the primitive church, nor did they ever obtain the perpetual consent and general approbation of the whole church; in short, they are so far from having any true authority, that they have been chiefly supported by counterfeit testimonies, and forged writings, the designs of which has been not to make men better, but richer, and to put their trust and confidence in creatures, and not in God; as might be easily shewn in their doctrines of papal supremacy, purgatory, invocation of saints, image worship &c. had I time for that purpose.

There is no question to be made, but the apostles taught the first christians the meaning of those hard places which we find in the holy writings. But who can tell with any certainty where now to find this? Nothing is more desirable, or would be more useful, than those apostolical interpretations of scripture, could any one inform us where they are. But as there is so little credit to be given to the *Roman* church, we cannot receive those traditions which they would press upon our belief, as doctrines of truth; such

such as, " that the church of *Rome*, is the mother and mistress of all other churches ; that the pope of *Rome* is the monarch or head of the universal visible church ; that all scriptures must be expounded according to the sense of this church ; that there are truly and properly seven sacraments, neither more or less, instituted by our blessed lord himself in the new testament ; that there is a proper and propitiatory sacrifice offered in the mass for the quick and dead, the same that Christ offered on the cross ; in short, the half communion, and the rest of the articles of their new faith, in the creed published by pope *Pius IV* ; all which are traditions of the *Romish* church alone, not of the universal, and rely solely upon their own authority ; and therefore we refuse and reject these things, because they have no foundation, either in the holy scripture, or in universal tradition. Indeed, to them, neither scripture nor tradition signify any thing, without their church's authority and definition, upon which the whole of their faith stands. They take sanctuary in their own authority, insisting that they are the sole judges of what is scripture, tradition, and antiquity ; nay, that they have power to declare any new point of faith, not heard of before. Hence we can never know when the christian religion will be perfected, because their church may bring in traditions by its sole authority whenever they please.

Thus I have endeavoured to represent in a concise plain manner, what to me seemed necessary about tradition, and it is evidently a base calumny to affirm, that the church of *England* rejects all tradition ; for the scripture itself which we receive, is a tradition, and we admit all other traditions that can be proved to be apostolical by the general testimony of the churches in all ages. But as many things were at first but private opinions, that are now become the particular doctrines of the *Romish* church,

church, who would impose her decrees upon us, under the venerable name of apostolical universal tradition, which is meer deceit; it behoves us not to admit nor trust to the traditions of such a church, as hath not only perverted some, abolished others, and invented many more; but has also been a very unfaithful preserver of some traditions of great moment, and can support the credit of those she pretends to have kept, by nothing but its own infallibility.

The words of a learned writer are worth notice*.
 “ If there be no traditions, besides the scripture to be received as of divine authority, then will the scripture remain the sole rule of faith, which is the point we contend for. Some parts of the scripture indeed, may require interpretation; but that is no reason why the whole is not a rule. The laws of the land require interpretation, and yet were never denied to be the rule of our civil obedience; and we acknowledge, that the best interpretation of scripture is truly catholic (not infallible) tradition, both written and unwritten in conjunction with each other. What really deserves the name of catholic doctrine, is such as has been always and universally received in the christian church. By this rule we prove our religion to be true, and the *Romanists* to be false. When they tell us, that oral tradition is more certain than scripture; or that things can be more surely delivered through many hundreds of ages, by word of mouth, than by writing; they contradict common sense, and the experience of mankind. Does it not stand to reason, that in long tract of time, many things may be, and often are lost and buried in oblivion; and a multitude of others mistaken and misrepresented, when only memory, hearsay, and word of mouth are depended upon; which might have been preserved, at least, with

* *Trap's popery truly stated*, p. 26. &c.

without any material, or considerable alteration, had they been committed to writing. St. *John* assures us, that numberless miracles were wrought by our saviour, which are not mentioned in his, or any other book; for that, should they all be recorded, *even the world itself, could not contain the books that should be written**. But is there so much as one of these delivered down to us by oral tradition?"

"Their objections against the sufficiency of the word of God, are the very same, which are urged by deists and atheists. In answer therefore to the arguments alledged by infidels on the one hand, and by these men, who call themselves the only true believers, on the other; I shall at once shew, that they are no real arguments against the sufficiency of scripture; and that what force they have is much stronger against oral tradition, than against scripture. They say we cannot be certain, that the scriptures were written by the authors whose names they bear. To this we reply, that we are as certain, and have as much evidence of this, as the nature of the thing will admit; no one doubts of the genuineness of other books, for which there is no more proof, than for these. Who questions, whether *Xenophon*, *Thucydides*, *Livy*, and *Cæsar*, wrote those books, which go under their several names? Some books, it is true, have been proved to be forged; but this is no reason, that those should be so, which have been universally received by the world as genuine; for then there would be an end of human testimony, and human faith, and even of the world itself. But we have much more evidence for the truth and authority of these writings, than of any others; because at their first appearance, they were maliciously opposed, as it were, by the whole world, by a multitude of learned and powerful enemies; who yet always acknowledged that they were genuine.

Porphyry

* John 21. 25.

Porphyry, Celsus, Julian, and others, who attempted to confute them, never pretended to deny them. But how can we be certain of the truth of any fact or doctrine, never committed to writing, which first came from we know not who, and has been transmitted down to us by word of mouth, for seventeen hundred years, unless we can be assured of its true author."

"But say they, admitting these books to be really written by the persons whose names they bear; yet how can we be sure, that they are rightly transcribed, printed, or translated? I answer, we are at least as sure that these are so, as that any other books are, about which none of these objections are made. Nay, we have all possible reason to think, that these are preserved more entire than any others; because supposing them to be divinely inspired, as the papists acknowledge them to be, we cannot but believe that God's especial providence more peculiarly watches over them, than any others. But allowing the uncertainty of what is written to be as great, as they pretend, yet is there not as much uncertainty in what is spoken? Cannot words spoken, as well as written, be misrepresented, altered and corrupted? Or rather, are they not much more likely to be so? especially, when they are conveyed down through millions of speakers, only by the help of memory. As for the various readings of the scriptures, there are only about three or four that are material, and even the doctrines said to suffer by these, are established by many other texts, of which there are no various readings." But say they,

"The scriptures are obscure and hard to be understood. To this we answer, that they are not so in any necessary point either of faith or practice; and is it not probable, that there will be as many and great difficulties and obscurities in what is said, as in what is written? Or rather many more and much greater.

greater. Cannot the holy ghost speak as plainly in writing, as men can by oral tradition? Besides, have they not disputes among themselves about the sense of scripture, as much as we? How then does tradition ascertain the sense of scripture, or supply its defects? But, say they, we cannot be infallibly sure, who were the authors of such and such books, and that they are rightly transcribed and translated. To this we reply, that there is as much certainty for it, as all rational men require in all other the most important affairs, as much as the nature of the thing will admit; as much or more, as we have for any thing else of the same kind, concerning which we have not the least doubt or scruple. Who questions whether there was such a man as *Julius Cæsar*, or such a place as *Rome*; though he never saw, nor can demonstrate the truth of either? To talk of nothing less than *infallibility* on all occasions, is a ridiculous *nostrum* peculiar to the *papists*; which ought to be laughed at and exploded, rather than seriously refuted."

"The papists, by preferring tradition before the word of God, do in effect destroy the scriptures, and substitute tradition in their room, even whatever tradition they think fit to impose upon the world, tho' never so contrary to scripture, reason, and our senses. Like the scribes and pharisees, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men; making the word of God of none effect by their traditions*. For to say we must submit to the churches interpretations of scripture, be they what they will, is at once to deny us the use of our reason."

"Lastly, they insist that the word of God is contained both in scripture and tradition. We say it is only to be found in scripture, because we can prove the divine authority of the one, but not of the other. Nay, we prove that their traditions are even contrary

* Mark 7. 7. 13.

trary to the word of God. We indeed own, that the scriptures being written, do not make it of divine authority, for the substance of it was spoken before it was written. And if any part of divine revelation was delivered down to us by word of mouth, it would certainly be nevertheless divine. But then we must be assured that it is so, before we can receive it under that character; and the church of *Rome*, has not the least proof for this, but only her bare word, and in truth, the whole matter at last resolves into that. For notwithstanding all the stir they make about scripture and tradition, they really stand to neither; but only endeavour to amuse the world with both, that their own church's authority may creep in between them. Scripture with them is uncertain, who shall determine it? Why, say they, the church, that is themselves. It is doubtful which is a true tradition, and which not; who shall decide this? Why, say they, the church, that is themselves. So that after all their carping upon the words scripture, tradition, antiquity, &c. the definitions of the church, always meaning themselves, are the last resort of all. That is popery is the only true religion, because it is their religion; and the church of *Rome* is the only true church, because the church of *Rome* says so, which is the only evidence she has for it."

I will now conclude this discourse with a brief admonition relative to our christian practice.

And as it is reasonable, fit and proper, that we should reject all spurious traditions, so let us be very careful to retain those which are genuine and true, to hold them fast and not let them go. Let us not dispute ourselves out of all religion, whilst we condemn that which is false, nor break christian unity, love and charity, because we cannot submit to all human impositions. And if we are not required to observe any tradition, but that delivered to us in the scripture

scripture, let us be careful to know and understand this divine tradition, as the same is there plainly declared, and not neglect to read those holy writings. If we contend and reason against the half communion, let us be careful frequently to receive the whole. If we dispute against purgatory, and reject it as being a mere fable; let us really and in earnest dread hell-fire; and whilst we think ourselves excused from observing many usages that have been in the church, let us be careful not to neglect all the substantial duties of righteousness, charity, sobriety, and godliness, for these are clearly delivered to us, by our lord and his apostles; and to observe all the ordinances of our church, which are not contrary to the word of God.

Lastly, as this evangelical doctrine is delivered down to us, so we must be delivered up to it. This is the end for which all divine truth is revealed to us. For without an hearty obedience and sincere compliance with the divine will, all the impressions which knowledge or faith can make on our souls will not avail us at the last day. But as all the parts of a good life are sufficiently taught us in the holy scriptures, if we would seriously and heartily practise and follow the doctrine which Christ and his apostles have there delivered, we shall have no occasion for any other. Whatsoever is pretended to be necessary besides, is not a doctrine according to godliness, but the design is only to open an easier way to heaven, than that which is plainly declared in the scriptures; namely by masses for the dead, indulgencies, satisfactions, the merits of the saints, and many other such inventions, that have no foundation in the scriptures, nor in true antiquity.

Indeed they pretend that antiquity is on their side, but in truth no more than tradition is. There is nothing so ancient as the holy scriptures, which are the oldest records of religion, and if we frame our

lives by them, we may be assured, that it will be according to the most ancient directions of piety, delivered in the holy oracles of God. For there is nothing before this to be our guide, and there can be nothing after it, but must be tried thereby; and as sure as that there is a gospel of God's grace, they that walk after this divine rule, peace shall be upon them, and mercy, as being the children of God.

DISCOURSE IX. Scot.

Of prayers in an unknown tongue.

I Cor. 14. 14.

For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful.

TO pray in an unknown tongue, is a thing so absurd in itself, and so plainly repugnant to all the ends of divine worship, that was not scripture against it, as it expressly is, reason itself would sufficiently justify our opposing it. The scripture makes it necessary for our understandings to concur with our wills and affections, when we render worship to God; but this is not possible, if we worship him in an unknown tongue. *God is the king of all the earth, sing ye praises with understanding* *. But if those hymns of praise are sung in a language the people are ignorant of, how can they sing praises with understanding? St. Paul exhorts the *Ephesians* and *Colossians*, to *speak to them-*

* Psal. 47. 7.

themselves in psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace, and making melody in their hearts to the Lord †. That is, to sing with due attention and affection, answerable to the matter contained in those holy hymns, which they sung in their public assemblies. But how can men attend to, or be duly affected with words they do not understand. Therefore the church of Rome, by using her hymns in an unknown tongue, acts directly contrary to the apostles precepts, and renders the performance useless to the people.

The same apostle makes use of a whole chapter * on purpose to dissuade against preaching and praying in an unknown tongue; for in those days the gift of tongues being common in the church, many who were inspired with it, so undervalued themselves upon it, that to gratify their own vanity, it became a usual practice for them to preach, pray, and sing psalms in languages unknown to their audience, without interpreting what they said, in the vulgar tongue; the apostle therefore in this chapter, designedly opposes this evil practice; and his principal argument is, that it was not consistent with the edification of the church, and which he applies to praying, as well as preaching. *He that speaketh in an unknown tongue, says he, speaketh not unto men, but unto God, who only understands all languages; for no man understandeth him, howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries; but he that prophesieth, or expoundeth scripture in a known tongue, speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort; he that speaketh in an unknown tongue, edifieth himself, if he understands what he says; but he that prophesieth, edifies the church. I would that ye all speak with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied; for greater is he that prophesieth, being more useful to the church, than he that speaketh with*

G 2

tongues.

† Ephes. 5. 19. Col. 3. 16. * 1 Cor. 14.

tongues. Again, says the apostle, *I had rather speak few words with understanding, than by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.* In all which places, the apostle doth most expressly condemn preaching in an unknown tongue, unless the same be interpreted to others.

But say the papists we do not preach in an unknown tongue, but the dispute is about praying in an unknown tongue. To which I answer, that the mass-book contains not only prayers, but sundry portions of scripture, and pious lessons, which are read to the people in an unknown tongue. Now these scriptures and lessons are either read for no end at all, or for the same with preaching, which is to instruct the people, their edification being the reason urged by the apostle, against preaching in an unknown tongue. And he applies this his reason, as well to praying as to preaching in an unknown tongue. *If I pray in an unknown tongue,* says he, *my spirit, or gift of tongues, prays, but my understanding is unfruitful to others; that is, it is without the fruit of instruction, or edifying to others.* So that its plain, St. Paul here urges the same reason against praying, as he had just before used against preaching in an unknown tongue.

To perform religious offices in an unknown tongue, is directly contrary to the natural end of speech; which is so to communicate our minds, as to be understood by one another: but to speak to others in a language they are ignorant of, can no more communicate our minds to them, than if we did not speak at all. For as the apostle argues, *except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air. If I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh*

a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me *. All which tend to shew, that he who speaks in a language not understood, whether in common conversation, or in religious offices, speaks to no purpose. And the reason is equally applicable to speaking in prayer, as in preaching, because the one, if not understood, is as much in vain, as the other. For if the proper end of speech is to be understood, we ought no more to pray than to preach in an unknown tongue; and it would be much more excusable for the popish priest to hold his tongue, and observe a silent meeting, while he acts over a set of ceremonies, than to say public prayers in a language not understood; it being more decent to use silence, than to speak to no purpose. Public prayers are necessary, either to direct the people what to pray for, or to unite their desires in the same petitions; but neither of these can be performed by such words as the people do not understand; so that to speak or read *latin* prayers to an *English* audience, is no more than breathing so many empty sounds into the air, which signify nothing; and both priests and people are meer barbarians to one another, or like two senseless eccho's, that speak and respond they know not what, and to no manner of purpose.

But the scripture expressly declares praying in an unknown tongue, to be contrary to the design and nature of religious worship; which being a reasonable service, requires that our rational faculties should closely attend to, and concur therein; for the life of divine worship consists in the internal acts of the mind, such as desire, love, hope, fear and reverence; and unless these concur with the external significations of our worship, I mean, our words and actions, to inform and animate them, it is all but a dead formality. But how is it possible

* 1 Cor. 14. 9, 11.

fible for us, to join these inward affections of our minds, with those outward significations of our worship, when we know not what they mean? Whilst men therefore, say their prayers in an unknown tongue, it is impossible for them to join their affection in such prayers; which so far from being acceptable to God, that they are only so many empty sounds in his ears. Hence, says the apostle, *I will pray with the spirit*, or gift of tongues, *and I will pray with the understanding also*; that is, in such a language, as others who pray with me, may understand. *I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also*; else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, or thy unknown tongue, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned, or hath not thy gift, say amen, at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understands not what thou sayst? The apostle here makes it necessary in all public prayer, that he who is the mouth of the congregation, should pray, or interpret his prayer, in the vulgar language of the people; because unless the people understand the language, they are not capable of praying with him. Again,

The scripture makes praying in an unknown tongue, utterly inconsistent with that joint concurrence of devotion, which is required in public worship. That we should join our hearts and affections in the same confessions, petitions, and thanksgivings is evident from many arguments, but in particular from that response, *amen*, which the people of God did always end their public prayers with; and by which they express the consent of their hearts and affections with those petitions and thanksgivings that were before offered up in their public assemblies. Thus the Jews were expressly commanded to respond or answer, *amen**. And in David's psalm of praise, *all the people said amen*,
and.

* Dent. 27. 15.

and praised the lord †. And when *Exra* blessed the lord the great God, all the people answered, amen, amen, with lifting up their hands †. And the psalmist directs all the people to say amen. By all which it is evident, that the people of God thought themselves obliged to make some expression of their hearts and affections concurring with the public prayers. But how was this possible for them to perform, if their prayers were in a language they did not understand? how could they hope, desire, or give thanks for they knew not what? nay, when they are ignorant, whether the words contain a petition or thanksgiving? But if the unlearned *Corinthians*, could not say *amen* to those inspired prayers, because they knew not what he who pronounced them said; for the same reason neither can the common people in the *Roman* church say *amen* to their *latin* prayers, because they know as little what is said when they are read to them; so that by expressing her public prayers in a language unknown to the people, the church of *Rome* renders their duty of saying *amen* to them impracticable.

The scripture also represents prayers in an unknown tongue, as a great indecency in public worship; for what a sight would it be for a stranger, who knows nothing of the matter, to observe a company of people assembled together, with an extraordinary appearance of devotion, only to see or hear a priest officiating to them, in a form of words, of which neither they, nor perhaps he himself understands one syllable; would not this stranger laugh at the simplicity of these people, or think worse of them? Let us hear *St. Paul* on the occasion. *If therefore the whole church be come together in one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will*

G 4

they

† 1. Chron. 16. 36. † Nehem. 8. 6. Psal. 106. 48.

they not say, that ye are mad? But for what reason will they say this? why, because those who meet upon a religious account, come to understand the way of worship, to hear what is prayed for, and to learn what is taught; but instead of this their ears are only filled with unintelligible sounds, which convey no certain notions to the mind, so that such hear and speak without any end or design; and if speaking in an unknown tongue was so indecent in these *Corinthian* assemblies, as that *St. Paul* supposed it made them to appear more like madmen, than true worshippers; he would hardly think the *latin* worship in the church of *Rome*, a reasonable service, when scarce one in five hundred understands it.

The great end of public liturgies is to direct the devotions of christians in such joint confessions, petitions, and thanksgivings, as most conduce to their spiritual benefit and advantage; to prescribe such confessions of sin, as are most apt to inspire true sorrow for, and abhorrence of it; such petitions for mercy, as will most affect them with a just sense of their wants, and dependance on God for supply and relief; with such praises and thanksgivings as will best excite in them a grateful apprehension of the divine goodness, an inflamed love of God, a profound admiration of his perfections, and an active resolution to transcribe and imitate them, in their conversation. So that the end which God aims at in our devotions, is not merely to make our prayers and supplications to him with bended knees; but principally, that by praying to him, we may improve ourselves, in all those holy and devout dispositions, wherein the perfection of our nature consists; nay, the *Trent* catechism acknowledges, that the end of our praying to God is, “that by conversing with him,
we

we may be the more ardently excited to the love and adoration of him ;” which all agree, is the most valuable part of our edification. And if the church of *Rome* intends, that the public prayers should minister to the people’s edification, they ought surely to understand them. For how can they be edified by hearing of prayers they are ignorant of? *St. Paul* requires, that in our religious assemblies, *all things should be done to edifying*. But how can people’s understandings be edified, by such offices as they do not understand? by such form of words, as convey no sense or meaning to their minds?

It is not for any advantage to God, that he requires our worship and service. *Our goodness extends not to him ; nor is it any gain to him, that we make our ways perfect* *. But it is our good which he aims at; that by our solemn addresses to him, we may be inspired with such an awful sense of his majesty as is necessary to oblige us to our duty, and to produce in us all those heavenly graces and perfections that tend to our own happiness ; and if our own edification be the end for which God requires our worship, we ought to render it to him, for this end and purpose. So that the popish liturgy, falls short of one of the common ends of divine worship, namely, the edification of the people, because of its being in an unknown tongue. For is it possible for the people to be edified, by what they do not understand? *St. Paul* tells us, *that all scriptures are profitable for instruction ; and that whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning* † ; doubtless, for the learning of the people, as well as the priest. But how can the scriptures in the *Roman* service be profitable, for the instruction and learning of the people,

G 5

when

* *Psal.* 16.² 2. *Job* 22. 23.
Rom. 15. 4.

† *2 Tim.* 3. 16.

when they are all shut up from them, in the dark lanthorn of an unknown tongue; and not permitted to transmit to them the least ray of light and information?

And if the people are obliged to join with the priest in the public prayers, which none in reason can deny, and is the very point we contend for; then they ought to understand the sense and meaning of those forms; it being impossible for them to express the devotion of their minds, in words they do not understand. Indeed, there is no part of public worship, in which the duty of the people is not as well concerned as that of the priest. Public christian worship consists of prayers, praises and thanksgivings, or of communion in the sacraments; and will any christian say, that the people are not as much concerned in these, as the priest? Both clergy and laity are equally obliged to worship God as well in public, as in private; for what else can they have to do in public worship, but to worship God? and the laity must join with the priest, in their public acts of worship, and pray, praise and give thanks with him, in the same stated forms, which is what we contend for; or else they must perform their worship separately from the priest, in distinct offices of prayer, praise and thanksgiving, or from their own extemporary invention, which must occasion a vast confusion in public worship; it being impossible for their hearts and affections to be united in the same things, and yet this is the peculiar advantage of public worship. But if the people are left to pray separately from the public liturgy, there will be in all probability, as many different hopes, desires and affections in their worship, as there are different men in the congregation. One will be confessing of his sins, another returning thanks; a third will be praying for a good harvest, another for repentance and pardon;

don; a fifth for a sick wife or child, another for grace against temptations; all which must tend to create as great a confusion of affections in their worship, as there was of languages among the bricklayers of *Babel*. If therefore the people are at all obliged to pray, and praise, and give thanks, in the public worship, which one would think no christian should deny; it is impossible for them to perform it with any decency or order, but in conjunction with the priest, in the public prayers or liturgy; and this they can never do, unless they understand the language of it.

The public prayers of the church, have been always looked upon as common to the people, as well as the priest; and that those of the temple were common to all the people, and that they joined in them, appears, not only from their responding *amen*, at the close of them, but also from several places of scripture. Thus says the psalmist, *I went with a multitude to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise; and in the temple doth every one speak of his glory* *. This shews, that the people joined in those public prayers and praises, which were offered up in the service of the temple. Indeed, it was an ancient canon of the *Jewish* church, that he who prays, ought always when he prays, to join with the church; and the *Jewish* doctors tell us, of eighteen prayers which the people were daily obliged to pray, or if hindered by business, to say one prayer the summary of them all. These prayers they were obliged to repeat after the minister †. And that the *Christian* as well as *Jewish* people, did always join in the public prayers, may easily be demonstrated from innumerable authorities of the fathers.

G 6

Justin

* Psal. 42. 4. 29. 9.

† *Lightfoot*, vol. II. p. 156. 158.

Justin Martyr tells us, that in their *Sundays* service, after they had heard the scriptures and exhortations, they rose up together, and poured forth their supplications. The account of their public worship, is thus given by *Clemens Alexandrinus*; says he, the terrestrial altar of the christians, is the assembly of such as join together in prayers, having, as it were, one voice or sentence. For the sacrifice of the church, is the word that ascends as incense from the holy souls, their whole minds together, with their sacrifice, being made known to God. And *Origen* tells us, that the Greeks in their prayers used the Greek; the Romans, the Latin; and that every one prayed to God, and praised him in their own dialect; and so the lord of all dialects, bears them praying to him in every dialect, expressing with one voice, in diverse tongues, the things which those diverse tongues signify; by which it is evident, that christian assemblies did then not only say the same prayers, but that they were all expressed in their own vulgar tongue. *St. Cyprian* tells us, that in their assemblies with the brethren, they celebrated the divine sacrifices of prayer and eucharist, together with the priest. And *St. Basil* says, that at break of day, we all in common, as from one mouth and heart, offer a psalm of confession to God, every one making the penitential words his own; which plainly shews, that it was then the manner of all christian assemblies, to join together in the same prayers. Many more authorities might be produced, but these I hope are sufficient, to satisfy any modest man, that in the public prayers, both of the Jewish and christian church, the people were always obliged to join and bear their parts; and if the church of *Rome* be singular from all others, the more is her shame; and though this be bad enough, I wish it was the only criminal singularity she is guilty of.

But

But the church of *Rome* must itself be forced to own, that the people are obliged to join in her public prayers with the priests, or to confess herself guilty of the highest absurdity ; for both in her mass and breviary, the priest is ordered to preface many of the prayers, with *oremus*, let us pray. Now, who doth the priest mean by *us* ? not himself only, for then he must divide himself ; and if he means himself and the people, as he certainly must, why then does he call upon the people to pray, if they are not obliged to pray with him ? so that evidently the design of this *oremus*, is to excite both priests and people to join in the same prayer ; for the priest speaks to himself conjunctly with the people, *let you and I pray* ; which necessarily supposes the people to be obliged to join with the priest in the same prayers, otherwise the *oremus* signifies nothing ; as indeed it does not to the generality of the people, few of whom understand its meaning. But surely it is very absurd, for a company of silly souls to be required to pray they know not what ; or which is the same, to desire and hope for good things, when they know not what they are ; nay, it is not only absurd, but impossible. For since it is the knowledge of good things that renders them desirable, how is it possible for men to pray for and desire of God the good things contained in a prayer, of which they are ignorant ; and for what they know may be a charm instead of a prayer, or an imprecation of mischief, instead of supplication for mercies. The papists indeed say, it is sufficient, that the public prayers be expressed in a language that the learned understand, and can say *amen* to ; but saith the apostle, this is not enough, for the language of your public prayers ought to be such, as the unlearned, as well as the learned, understand and can say *amen* to. Here then are two contradictory sentences, and which
of

of them is in the right, I think ought to be left to St. Paul's decision.

The true question between the papists and us, is, whether the people do really understand the language of their prayers? For if they do not, it is unknown to them, and so is condemned by St. Paul. But say they, some of the people do understand it, that is, perhaps one in five hundred may; and so many of the *Corinthian* people probably understood *Arabic* and *Persia*. Or suppose it was one in a thousand, the case is the same, if the generality of the people mean the people; and the commonalty or generality of the people no more understand *Latin*, than the chief part of the *Corinthians* did *Arabic* or *Persia*; the one as well as the other must then be in an unknown tongue to the people, so that they have no way to justify their *Latin* service. And whilst our adversaries endeavour to evade St. Paul's authority, let them take care, lest they verify his prophecy, when he tells us, *that the day of Christ shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God**.

* 2 Thes. 2. 3. 4.

DIS-

DISCOURSE X. Dean Freeman.

Of invocating and worshipping of saints
and angels.

Col. 2. 18. 19.

Let no man beguile you of your reward, in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels.—and not holding the head.

THE church of *England* in her twenty-second article condemns invocation of saints, as a *fond thing, vainly invented, and grounded upon no warranty of scripture, but is rather repugnant to the word of God*; and in her homily against idolatry, she makes all who believe and practise it, to be guilty of the same idolatry that was amongst *Ethnics and Gentiles*. Hence we plainly see the sense and judgment of our church: and that she is right therein I shall endeavour to prove; by shewing, first, what the doctrine and practice of the church of *Rome* is, as to invocation of saints, and on what occasion it began. Secondly, that there is not the least proof of it from scripture, but much against it. Thirdly, that the fathers of the first three hundred years, are all express in their writings against it.

In the *Trent* council, it is decreed, “That all bishops and pastors that have cure of souls, do diligently instruct their flock, that it is good and profitable, humbly to pray unto the saints, and to have recourse to their prayers, help and aid;” and anathematizes all who refuse to practise it; so that whoever shall think and teach the contrary, or say, that this practice is repugnant to the scriptures,

tures, derogatory to the glory of God, as sole governor of the world, and highly injurious to the honour of Christ, who is the only mediator between God and man; all such in the judgment of the church of *Rome*, think impiously, and if the pope's power and infallibility do not fail him, they must be damned for it.

It is indeed pretended by them, that they no more pray to saints departed, than one living christian does to another, when he says, pray for me, and remember me in your prayers. But, was this the true meaning of such devotions, so far from being any justification of them, that even the apology is sinful, and the practice no less to be condemned. For when they pray to departed saints, to pray for them, they either hear their prayers, or they do not. If they do hear the prayers put up to them by innumerable persons in far distant places; is not this to ascribe to them that ubiquity and omnipresence, which solely and peculiarly belongs to God? If they do not hear their prayers, then it is absurd and ridiculous. For to what purpose should they pray to them, if they cannot hear their prayers? Some indeed think that saints in heaven may pray to God for their friends and relations, whose necessities and infirmities they were well acquainted with before they left the body. Thus *St. Cyprian* and *Cornelius* agreed, that who went first to glory, should be mindful of the others condition to God. But surely there is a great difference between the saints interceding for us, and our invocation of them. Between their praying for us in heaven, and our praying to them on earth; between one living christian desiring another to pray for him, who hears his request, and is acquainted with his condition; and our addressing to saints departed, to pray for us, who know us not, and are ignorant of our state.

Besides,

Besides, when they pray to saints departed, they do it with all the solemnities of religious worship, in sacred offices on their knees, with heads uncovered, with hands and eyes lift up, and in places dedicated to God's worship. Now, though they only pray to saints to pray for them, yet as they do this, with the same external acts of devotion, as we call upon God; how can they be excused from attributing that honour to the creature, which is only due to the creator? As God is owned to be an infinite being, and to have incommunicable perfections, so there ought to be some peculiar acts of worship appropriate to him, to signify that we do thus inwardly esteem, and believe of God; the applying of which to any but him, is plainly to rob him of his honour; nor can I see, how the *Romish* invocation of saints is of the same nature with our requesting our fellow members to pray for us. For besides the presence of the one, and the absence of the other, is there no difference, between my desiring a good christian to pray for me, and falling down on my knees, to make that request with hands and eyes lifted up in a temple? Would not every good man, who regards the honour of God, shew his detestation of such an action, and say as *St. Peter* did to *Cornelius* falling down before him, *stand up, I myself also am a man*; or as *St. Paul* did to the men of *Lystra*, who would have worshipped him and *Barnabas*, *why do ye these things, we also are men of like passions with you*; and what the saints in heaven did, and would have refused here on earth, they must with the utmost abhorrence reject now they are in heaven.

And that the papists not only pray to saints, to pray to God for them, in order to obtain of him, such aids and supplies as they want, but also to saints themselves for those very blessings, is very

evident from their practice ; or else, to what purpose do they advise us to fly, not only to their prayers, but for *their help and assistance* ; and to pray to them, *to visit, to make haste and come to them*, did they not expect some other aid than only to pray for them ? Or why do they put up their addresses to one saint rather than another, according as they were famous here, either for some eminent grace, or strange cure wrought by them ; but that they believe and trust, that they who did such things on earth, are much more willing and able to do them now they are in heaven ? Thus they call upon St. *Roch* in times of infection, upon St. *Apollonia* for ease against the rage of the tooth-ach, upon St. *George* for assistance against enemies. Indeed, was it lawful to address any at all, this might be a good reason ; but not being sure that these *Romish* saints, are saints in heaven, or if they are, as it is certain they cannot hear us, much less bestow health and deliverance upon us, we therefore ought to call upon God alone, who only is a *present help in time of need, and the saviour of them that put their trust in him*.

But to put this out of doubt, in the present *Roman* breviary, published by order of the council of *Trent*, the blessed virgin is there invocated for *strength against enemies* ; she is not only called the *gate of heaven*, but intreated to *loose the bonds of the guilty, to give light to the blind, to drive away our evils, to obtain good things for us*. Some authors of theirs, not of the least note, tell us, *That God hath given the virgin Mary half of his kingdom. That the prayers made to her and by the saints, are better than those made by Christ. That the mother's milk is equally to be esteemed with the son's blood*. Thus you see, what super-refined service they put up to the blessed virgin ; nor is that to the apostles and other saints much behind it.

St.

St. Peter is intreated to bear their prayers, to untie the bonds of their iniquity, and to open the gates of heaven. All the apostles, to absolve them from their sins, by their command, to heal all their spiritual maladies, and encrease their virtues. St. Andrew is supplicated for patience to bear the cross of Christ. St. Francis for deliverance from the bondage of sin. St. Bridget for wisdom against the snares of the world; St. Agnes for the grace of charity; and St. Catherine for all graces. We are taught to pray to be made partakers of heaven by their merits; to put confidence in their intercessions, and to ascribe our mercies and deliverances to their power and interest in God. They pray in the office for the sick, that the sick person, through the intercession of the blessed virgin, and all saints, may obtain eternal life. And let every one judge, whether this be not to worship the creature, instead of the creator; and to seek to finite beings for those blessings, which only God and his son Jesus Christ can give unto men.

And they not only pray to them with mental and vocal prayers, but confess their sins to them. Thus in the reformed Roman missal; "I confess to almighty God, to the ever blessed virgin, to blessed Michael archangel, to blessed John Baptist, to the holy apostles Peter and Paul, to all the saints, and to you brethren, that I have sinned in thought, word and deed." They make vows to them, they offer up laud and praise to them, and intreat them to receive their thanksgivings. Their learned men usually conclude their books with praise to God, and the blessed virgin. Bellarmine ends thus, praise be to God, and to the blessed virgin, also to Jesus Christ; so that they not only give equal praises to her with God, but even a pre-eminence to her above Christ. They appoint angels and saints, deputies and lieutenants under God, in the government of the world, making them guardians,

guardians, patrons, and patronesses, over kingdoms, cities, churches and single persons. They teach the people to make choice of some one of the saints to be their patron, to recommend them to their protection, especially in times of difficulty and temptation. Oh heavens! oh earth! into what madness and wickedness against God are men fallen? How do creatures dishonour their creator and maker? I say not this, to reproach the saints, but to condemn the foolishness and wickedness of men, who make false gods of the true servants of God, by attributing to them the power and honour which is only due to God. I now proceed briefly to shew, on what occasion the invocation of saints first began.

The primitive christians did not invoke their victorious martyrs, but they loved their memories, commemorated their virtues, and blessed God for their example, without performing any part of that religious worship which was only due to God. But afterwards, when through the good providence of God, and favour of *Constantine* the great, the church enjoyed rest, ease and prosperity, the devil, finding he could not prevail over the christian faith, by fiery tryals, he attempted to deprave and corrupt it by loose and superstitious doctrines, in which he was too successful, men being forward enough to close with all such offers, as will carry them to heaven on the easiest terms. The church being now free from persecution, and riches and honours attending the professors of christianity, they began to place their religion more in shews and pretences, than in a sincere substantial piety; and instead of frequenting the tombs of the martyrs, that their affections might be raised, their devotions enlivened, and their faith and charity receive farther degrees of warmth, from their shining examples; they now took more care to honour the saints by lofty prai-

ses and commendations of them, than to imitate their virtues and graces. Hence they attributed the miracles done at the martyr's tomb, to their mediation with God; so that instead of seeking relief of God, they directly applied to the martyrs for their aid and assistance. Hence they recommended themselves to the martyrs intercessions, begged to be heard for their sakes, and to be helped by their prayers. By such steps and degrees as these, the frequenting the places where the martyrs were interred, and honouring their names and memories, was turned into superstitious devotion, which soon ended in solemn and downright invocation. But that there is not the least proof of this from scripture, is the second point I am to consider.

And I would first observe, that it is confessed by *Bellarmin*, *Eckius*, and some others of their learned divines, that there is no express text either in the old or new testament, for this doctrine and practice; and ought that then to be made a duty, which has no law to command it? Were not the scriptures written *to make men wise unto salvation, and to instruct them thoroughly unto all good works*? Do not the apostles assure us, *that they have made known to men the whole will of God, and kept nothing hid from them*? Do they not earnestly exhort us, *to pray always without ceasing*; and in a language, that all who hear may understand? And can we imagine, after all this, that had invocation of saints been a duty, they would not have mentioned it? Were not our saviour and the apostles guided by the holy spirit of God? And therefore, surely had this saint-invocation been necessary, they would not only have expressly commanded it, but enforced it more than most other christian duties, it being a thing new to the *Jews*, and not practised by them. For though sometimes they prayed to God to remember *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, that is his own covenant
and

and promise he had made with them, yet they never used them as intercessors, or said, *holy Abraham*, or *holy Isaac* pray for us.

But though there be no proof in scripture for it, yet there is full and evident proof from thence against it. If as *St. Austin* says, God is so to be worshipped, as he himself hath commanded, then all those places of scripture that commands us to direct our prayers only to God, in the name and by the sole mediation of Jesus Christ, do equally forbid us to direct our prayers to any other object or mediator for that purpose. Thus, "whatsoever ye shall ask the father in my name, he will give it you. In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask it of God, who gives to all men liberally. Thou that hearest prayers, unto thee shall all flesh come. How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?" Now if none but God is to be believed, none but God is to be *called upon*. Another evident proof we have from *St. Paul*, *there is one God, and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus*. That is, as there is but one God only, and no more, to whom we ought to pray, so there is but one mediator only, and no more, by whom we have access with boldness, to the throne of grace: one mediator emphatically, in the same sense as there is *one God*; and you may as well make more Gods, as more mediators.

Another scripture against invocation and worshipping of saints, are these words of our saviour; *thou shalt worship the lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve**. And that of *St. Paul*, *let no man beguile you of your reward, in a voluntary humility, and worshipping of angels, and not holding the head*. Where he expressly condemns the worship of angels as

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* Mat. 4. 10.

forfaking of Chrift, and not holding the head; and if the worfhip of angels be forbidden, it follows with greater force of reason, that the worfhip of faints departed is fo. St. *Paul* calls this not holding the head, becaufe fuch perfons fet up more mediators befides Chrift, who was the only one appointed by God; and they that join others with him, do moft evidently leave and forfake him. Accordingly the council of *Laodicea* by their canon, condemned this practice as idolatrous, in thefe words, “that chriftians ought not to forfake the church of God, and invoke angels, becaufe they that do fo, forfake our Lord *Jesus Chrift* the fon of God, and give themfelves to idolatry.” St. *Paul* and the canon both fpeak fo direct againft the *Romanifts*, that *Baronius* was hard put to it when he fays, “that it was the religious worfhip of falfe and heathenifh Gods, not that of good angels, that was condemned by both.” But whoever confiders, that the apoftle condemns the worfhip of angels in general, and duly weighs the feries of his difcourfe, will eafily apprehend, that it is not levelled againft the heathens who had not then embraced chriftianity, but ftill worfhipped their falfe gods; but againft thofe judaizing chriftians, who retaining ftill a mighty veneration for angels, as the fuppofed givers of the law, endeavoured to introduce the worfhip of them into the church of Chrift. And the apoftle’s argument to diffuade them from worfhipping of angels, is, that they thereby forfake Chrift, which therefore could not concern the heathens, who had not believed on him.

We have thus feen, that the f acred fcriptures do condemn the invocation and worfhipping of faints, and that the fathers in the pureft ages, for the firft three hundred years, underftood the fcriptures as to this point, in the fame fense as proteftants do, is clear from their writings; and which

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will yet more fully appear, if we consider, first, that they generally denied the doctrine on which invocation of saints is founded; namely, that departed saints are now in heaven and enjoy the beatific vision. The *Romanists*, indeed, ground this their belief, from the spirits of just men being in heaven, who therefore know the petitions and request of their humble supplicants; but the primitive fathers did positively declare and believe, that the saints departed are not yet admitted to the sight of God, but only continue in certain receptacles, there to enjoy peace and rest, till the general resurrection. This they have not only asserted, but endeavoured to prove, from our saviour's soul being in paradise, which they will not have to be the highest heaven; and by supposing the saints in a condition not yet compleatly happy, instead of invocating them, they prayed for their farther bliss and consummation; and by the *Romanist*'s own confession, there were no fewer than eighteen fathers of this opinion. Again,

The fathers condemned the heathens as guilty of Idolatry, for invocating their demons, or inferior deities, which is the same with the *Romish* invocation of saints and angels. The parity and agreement amongst them is very obvious. As first in the object of their invocation. The heathens had one supreme God, and a multitude of inferior deities; the *Romanists* have also, besides one God above all, a multitude of angels and saints departed. Secondly, In the office ascribed to them. The heathens employed their dæmons to carry up the prayers of men to God, to obtain such things as they wanted; supposing that supreme God to be of too pure and sublime a nature, to converse immediately with men, they applied to these as advocates and mediators between God and men, and as intercessors to procure their desired blessings; and is not this the

same thing the church of *Rome* teaches, concerning the office of angels, and blessed spirits in the behalf of men, to solicit God, through their prevailing merits and interest in him, to obtain what they pray for? Thirdly, in that the foundation of their worship and invocation to them, was from a supposition the heathens had, that there were a middle sort of beings, between God and men, that participated of both natures, and by that means an intercourse was maintained between heaven and earth; and as God was to be worshipped for himself, so they thought, the others were to be loved and honoured “for his sake, as being Gods by way of participation, and like him as his vicars, and as reconcilers betwixt them.” And is not this the declared reason, why the church of *Rome* gives religious worship to angels and departed saints, “because of a middle sort of worth and excellency in them, that is neither infinite as the divine, nor so low as the human, but spiritual and supernatural, whereby approaching near to the divinity, they have great interest in the court of heaven, and ought as *Celsus* said of their *dæmons*, to be prayed to, that they might be favourable and propitious to us.” So exact is the parallel between them. Against this *dæmon*-worship the fathers replied, that whatever supernatural excellencies were to be found in the spirits above ought to be acknowledged in proportion to such excellencies; but then they were not to be esteemed inwardly as Gods, nor yet to be worshipped with any outward act of religious worship, which was solely due to God, and not to be given to any the highest created being, though of the greatest excellency. This appears from the writings of *St. Ignatius, Ireneus, Eusebius, St. Austin, Tertullian*, and others.

And that the doctrine and practice of invoking saints, is impious and idolatrous, is evident from

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hence, that *omniscience* and *omnipresence*, attributes and perfections solely proper and peculiar to God, are ascribed to saints and angels; for when mental and vocal prayers are offered up to them, as the church of *Rome* directs, it supposes them privy to the very thoughts, and acquainted with the hearts of men. Also when innumerable prayers and supplications from millions of places, at the greatest distance from each other, are at the same time put up to them, it supposes, that they are present in all places to hear such petitions, and what more or greater can be said of God? Is not this that infinite knowledge, and omnipresent power, that the scriptures solely attribute to the creator of all things, and have denied to any of the highest created beings? And though I cannot describe the bounds, measures, and perfections, of the angelical nature, yet certain it is, that neither they nor any other, the most elevated part of God's creation, can know the hearts of men, and be in all places at one time. It is only God *who knoweth all the hearts of the children of men. I the Lord search the heart, and try the reins.* By this argument the fathers triumph over the *Arians*, in proving the divinity of the son, and the holy ghost, which yet would not have been a good argument, had not this knowledge been an incommunicable perfection in the divine nature.

But the scripture informs us, that the saints departed do not know what is done on earth. God tells *Josiah*, "thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace, neither shall thine eyes see the evil I will bring upon this place. The dead know not any thing of the affairs of this world. His sons come to honour and he knoweth it not, and they are brought low says *Job*, and he perceiveth it not*." *Abraham* doth not know us, and *Israel* is ignorant of us†. Hence *St. Austin* concludes, "that if those great men,

* 2 Chron. 34. 28. Eccl. 9. 5. † Isa. 63. 16.

men, and founders of their nation, were ignorant of what was in after-ages to their posterity ; why should the dead be thought in a condition to know or help their surviving friends in what they do ?” Besides,

This doctrine and practice highly derogates from the glory of God, as governor of the world, the great lord of heaven and earth, from whom we derive all that we are and have ; in him we live, move, and have our being ; he gives to all life and breath and all things. And though he is pleased sometimes to make use of the ministry of angels, as instruments of his providence towards men, yet he has nowhere said, that he hath divided to them, or to the saints departed, their several provinces ; or appointed them patrons and guardians over certain persons and possessions, or given them a power over certain maladies and diseases ; but has reserved the power of dispensing his favours in his own hands, and therefore all our trust and confidence ought to be placed in God, all our thanks and praises are due only to him, who alone is to be acknowledged, as the author and giver of all our blessings. But to ascribe protection, power, and patronage, to angels and saints, is to rob God of the honour of being sole governor of the world, and to make some of his creatures partake with him, of that trust and affection, homage and subjection, that is wholly due to him from all his creatures. God is of infinite wisdom, goodness and power, always able to afford suitable aids and supplies to the wants of his creatures, and not only allows, but hath commanded all to call upon him in the day of trouble, to pour out their complaints to him, and hath promised to hear their prayers and to answer them. He hath also appointed his own son God with himself, to receive the petitions of all his subjects, and both are infinitely more able and willing to hear and succour them,

them, than the best, wisest and most powerful of all created beings. And shall we be afraid to use the liberty that God hath given us? Shall we call that impudence, which God hath made our duty? Whilst we pretend humility, shall we forfeit our allegiance, distrust his promises, and suspect the goodness of his nature, for fear of being too bold with his person? Lastly,

It is highly injurious to the honour of Christ, as the only mediator God has appointed between God and man. As a reward for the unspotted innocency of his life, and perfect obedience of his death, God exalted him to the right hand of majesty and glory, bestowed a mediatorial kingdom on him, invested him with all power in heaven and earth, and gave him authority to receive and answer the prayers of his people*, so that to make more mediators than Christ, is to undervalue his all-sufficient merits, to distrust his never-failing interest and power with God, and to invade that honour and royalty, which God hath conferred only on him; and by giving to angels and saints the same power, they give them the same honour too, and Christ is robbed of both. For to which of the angels or saints departed, hath God said, "sit thou on my right hand to make intercession for men?" Which of them has he at any time affirmed, as he has done of Christ, "he is able to save them to the uttermost, that come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for men. That if any man sin he is an advocate with the father for him? Or, whatsoever ye shall ask the father in his name, it shall be given you? Surely, they who would have angels and saints mediators between God and men, ought to produce a commission, signed by God, or his son Jesus, to constitute them such. But this they cannot do. Indeed, the blessed spirits above,

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are said to stand about the throne of God, and the holy angels to behold his face; and as the honour of a prince is encreased by the number of his attendants, so our Lord's exaltation is rendered the more glorious, by those ten thousand times ten thousand that minister unto him; but yet it is never said, *they sit at God's right hand, or live forever to make intercession for us.* And having no such delegated power from God, for this office, the honour and worship that belongs to it, cannot be given to them, without manifest wrong and sacrilege to Christ, who is only invested with such power. The holy angels are God's ministring spirits, and the spirits of just men departed, his glorified saints; but God hath made "Jesus only Lord and Christ, and put all things in heaven and earth in subjection under his feet;" of him only hath he said, "let all the angels honour him, and let all the saints fall down before him, and all men honour the son, even as they honour the father*."

To conclude; Could we absolutely be certain, that the saints departed, do now reign in heaven, and enjoy the beatific vision, and that it was lawful to invoke such as the blessed virgin and holy apostles, who are undoubtedly saints, yet methinks every one should be cautious, how they honour all whom the pope hath canonized. Surely, the prelates and bishops in *Henry VIII's* time, had as much reason to unfaint *Thomas Becket*, for being a rebel against his prince, as pope *Alexander III.* had to canonize him for being a bigot for the church. What can any sober christian think of the saintship of some, who never lived in the world, and of others who never had any goodness. I am very confident, that the greatest incendiaries and disturbers of the peace of mankind do as well deserve to be sainted, as pope *Hildebrand*, or *Gregory VII.* and many others,

others, whose saintship may be justly suspected; nay, *Bellarmino* himself admits, "that the pope's canonizations are doubtful and subject to error."

DISCOURSE XI. Abp. Wake.

Of the honour due to the virgin *Mary*.

Luke 1: 48, 49.

*From henceforth all generations shall call me blessed;
for he that is mighty, hath done to me great things,
and holy is his name.*

THESE words are part of that song of thanksgiving, which the blessed virgin made to God, in return for that wonderful favour he had vouchsafed to her, in esteeming her worthy to become the mother of our lord; and I shall from hence shew, what that honour is, which the blessed virgin is capable of receiving, and which protestants pay to her memory; and then produce some instances of that additional worship, which the *Romish* church pretends to be due to her. Lastly, I will offer some of those reasons, for which we think such worship to be unlawful.

Though the papists have exalted the glories and prerogatives of the blessed virgin to a very great and extravagant degree, yet since they confess her to be a meer creature, the measure we must take whereby to judge what honour may rightly be paid her, must be to consider, what honour any creature in her circumstances is capable of receiving;

ing; and if we do not scruple to pay her any honour, that does not entrench upon our piety, and confound the service of God, and his creatures together, it cannot be justly said, that we refuse to pay her all that respect which belongs to her. — As she is departed from hence, all we can do is to follow her with our esteem, our praise, and imitation, to give her all that honour which any creature in the same circumstances is fit to receive, or that may be lawful or reasonable for us to offer.

Indeed, we do not pray to her now, nor would we was she on earth, and were sure she could hear and know our requests; because we consider prayer as an act of religious worship, which is due to God only. But we bless God for honouring her so far, as to make her the mother of our lord; and with the angel we pronounce her blessed among women, saying with her to God, *my soul doth magnify the lord, and my spirit rejoiceth in God my saviour, in that he regarded the lowliness of his hand-maiden.* When we stand at our altars, and celebrate the blessed sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, and set forth the lord's death until his coming; though we cannot do this to the honour and veneration of any other than him only, whose death and passion we commemorate: yet we name her at the holy table, we there recite the history of God's favour to her, and with her magnify *him* on that account. But when we confess our sins, and recommend ourselves and others to God's mercy; when we give thanks for any blessings received; in these and the like cases, we think it an impiety to join the daughter of *Anna* with the great God, the lord of heaven and earth. We chuse rather to follow her example, and say, *my soul doth magnify the lord, and my spirit rejoiceth in God my saviour,* than to divide the glory

between God and her, by giving glory to *Jesus* and *Mary*.

If we make a vow unto the lord, or swear by his name, we do not think it lawful to join God and the blessed virgin together, lest we thereby make her the searcher of hearts, as well as him, and a powerful avenger of secret sine. If we speak of her, we readily give her any attribute which the holy scripture warrants, or her nature allows of; but to call her queen of heaven and mother of divine grace, and ourselves her suppliants*; to beseech her, that she and her son would bless us; this we think is carrying the compliment too far, a strain much fitter for some poetical heathen goddess, than for a christian saint. But let all such superstitions be laid aside; let her be exempted from all religious worship, which is the peculiar right of that God who made her and us; and whom alone we ought to adore; and then we will freely allow her all that she can justly claim of us; which is to have a due esteem and value for her, and to express this by suitable actions.

We believe her to have been a most pure, holy and virtuous creature; that both her mind and body were spotless, chaste, and immaculate: and therefore a person the most fit for the Holy Ghost to over-shadow, and for the son of the most highest to inhabit. When we consider the firmness of her faith, the fervour of her devotion, the excellency of her humility, we cannot but acknowledge an extraordinary grace in her, working all those eminent and divine qualities; and though we cannot determine many curious questions, whether she was conceived in sin, or sanctified in her mother's womb? And whether this sanctification was such, as to keep her from ever committing sin? Yet as we do not find the scripture has exempted her
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* See the litany of the blessed virgin.

from all sin, so neither do we accuse her of any; and as to her present state, we doubt not, but God who shewed her such favour on earth, hath also very highly exalted her in heaven; and we think it very probable, that she who brought forth the son of God into the world, has obtained the chiefest place in God's kingdom, next to him, who was God as well as man. But must we therefore set her up as a mediatrix, when there is only one mediator, *the man Christ Jesus*; and tie the hands of God so, as not to allow any to be saved, but according to her will; nay, make her queen of heaven and earth, with power to save her votaries, if they sufficiently love and worship her, whatever their affections or service be to God; and of fetching souls, not only out of purgatory, but even from hell itself, by her authority; of ordering all events, the fortunes of men and kingdoms, so that all battles and victories are obtained by her favour, and to whom praise and honour ought to be returned for the success. These are the extravagancies of some of our adversaries, but God forbid they should ever be the practice or opinions of any protestants. In short, none can entertain more honourable sentiments of the blessed virgin, than we do; unless they will run into blasphemy, and believe what neither scripture nor antiquity hath delivered, nor piety, nor common sense will suffer us to receive. I now proceed to consider, whether our actions are suitable to our opinions in this affair.

The holy virgin, however highly exalted by God, being still a meer creature, our actions towards her must be no other, than what such a creature is capable of receiving, and which may be summed up in these particulars. To celebrate the memory of those blessings which God has bestowed on her. To return praises to God on that account; and

endeavour to imitate her excellencies. This is all the honour she is capable of receiving from us, and all these particulars we are ready carefully to observe.

Let the twenty-fifth of *March*, which we call *Lady day*, witness for us, how careful we are to celebrate her memory. We mark it out in our rituals, as a day holy to the lord; we annually assemble ourselves solemnly to recount what the holy scriptures have recorded of God's mercies to her, and to bless and praise him on that account. Indeed, we do not say any *ave-maries* as they do, nor can we think any honour is done the blessed virgin, by the tautology of repeating the angel's salutation to her upon her conception; which is now as unseasonable in the application, as it is vain in the repetition; and yet we recite the history, and celebrate the memory of that surprizing salutation, when it is necessary for us to read it in our assemblies. Thus do we commemorate God's mercies to her. We also return praises to God on that account. The foundation of all God's particular favours to her, is, that of our blessed Lord's being born of her. This is the subject of all our praises to God; every thanksgiving of ours to heaven, is begun, carried on, and ended with it; so that in effect, all that part of our religious service, which consists in giving thanks to God for the redemption of mankind, is but a continued acknowledgment of the honour and favour done to the holy *Mary*; which shews how careful we are to praise God for his mercies to her, and to ourselves by her. Lastly, we must endeavour to imitate her virtues; and in this we do not come behind her highest votaries; not an act of piety recorded in her life, but our church exhorts us to transcribe into ours. Indeed, we come much short of her in our practice; but this is our infirmity, and

and not any defect in the doctrine and directions of our church. This then is the honour we pay to the blessed virgin, and which we suppose belongs to her. I will next consider what sort of worship the church of *Rome* pretends to be due to her; and here I will give you some account both of their opinions and practices in this matter.

It is scarce to be imagined, to what prodigious excesses some mens superstition has carried them, as to this particular; founded on the supposed excellency of the blessed virgin being superior to all other saints, and therefore to be worshipped with a super-eminent sort of religious worship; and though they pray to other saints, as well as to the blessed virgin, yet they have such a peculiar confidence in her, that in all their public and private addresses, the chiefest part of the performance is divided between God and her. Thus in the canon of the mass, in all their liturgies, litanies, and salves, holy *Mary* is set up as no small part of their worship; and the council of *Basil* tells us, that the reason of this is, "because she is the most exalted, and most ready to hear us." And say *Suarez*, "the intercession of the blessed virgin above any others, is the most useful to us, and therefore *above all* others, ought to be invoked by us."

As then it is the opinion and practice of the church of *Rome*, that the blessed virgin is to be called upon in all places, and upon all occasions, by all persons; they must therefore suppose, that she knows, and can attend to the prayers made to her, and is capable of affording the assistance required of her; and by consequence she must partake of the immensity of God, and is omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent, as well as he. For if she cannot distinctly attend to all the requests every where made to her, or is not capable

of knowing them, or has not power to grant them; then they pray to no manner of purpose, and her votaries would soon decrease, did they not hope for such an effect of their addresses to her, as must imply what I before inferred, from their calling upon her. Nor do they only suppose her a fit object of their adoration, but they set her up as an advocate or mediatrix in heaven, and have recourse to her as such; and though they pray to other saints, yet they look upon the blessed *Mary*, to be a more effectual mediatrix, and to have a more peculiar right to that title and dignity, than any of the rest of the saints; and to be our advocate, in the same manner that Christ is. They believe the blessed virgin obtains whatsoever she demands, and that her quality of mother gives her power in some manner to alter the decrees of providence; nay, if we consider the addresses made to her, or regard the writings of some of the greatest persons, in the *Roman* communion, she has even power to remit sins, to confer grace, to save those who call upon her, and trust to her for salvation.

Thus, if they confess their sins, they do it not only to God, but also to her; if they absolve their penitents, the merits of the mother, are joined to the passion of the son, for their forgiveness. If they pray, it is that *Mary* and her son, would bless them; when they salute her, the compliment is, "hail queen, mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness, and our hope; all hail *." Such is their extravagance in this matter; and as to the opinions of their learned men, in conformity to this superstition, it would be endless to repeat one half of their excesses. I will only offer you a short specimen of a few questions, which has been proposed by one of their writers, with great approbation.

* *Crafft* devot. p. 86.

bation †. “Whether a christian that is devoted to the blessed virgin, can be damned? To which he answers, roundly, that he can not. Whether the blessed virgin loves sinners, so as to save them? To this, she herself has given us an assurance, by a revelation, to one of the saints, I am, says she, “the queen of heaven, the mother of mercy, the joy of the just, and the gate by which sinners must go to God; provided only, that they call upon me, and put their trust in me.” Hence, we may see, what their extravagant opinions are of the holy *Mary*, and wherein they differ from us, namely, that she is to be honoured with a religious worship, above any other saint; that she is to be prayed to, as an advocate and mediatrix in heaven; that she has authority to do whatever she pleases there, and does in effect partake of the most proper and peculiar attributes and prerogatives of the divinity.

Let us next enquire what their practices are towards her; and there is so near a connection between the opinions and practices of the church of *Rome*, with reference to the blessed virgin, that it is impossible to mention the one, without inferring the other, as consequent to it. But because the true difference between us may more truly appear, I will make a few reflections on their practice of piety towards the holy *Mary*, as offered to her both in their public worship, and private devotion.

If we consider the public prayers of the church, sometimes we find the mass said to her honour; and in the canon of it, God is constantly desired, that for her merits, he would grant them the help of their protection. They close their devotions with a salutation and address to her; and once a week a particular one, is publickly said to her.

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† *Craffet* par. 1. p. 50, 54, 86.

I have already observed, what a share she has in their confessions and absolutions. Three times every day, at the sound of a bell, all her votaries are taught to fall down and worship her. In their solemn sermons to the people, the preacher first invokes the assistance of the *virgin Mary*, in the angelical salutation. I might add a long catalogue of other superstitions; such as building of churches, and setting up altars and images to her honour. Their litanies and processions, in which she bears no small part. The glorious titles and attributes given her in all their prayers, and many other instances equally superstitious. By which it appears, how they have divided their love, service and obedience; nay, their very *faith* and *hope*, between God and her: as if the end of christianity was to teach us more how to magnify the mother, than how to serve, honour, and believe in the son; and that the duty of a christian was as much to set forth the praise of the *virgin Mary*, as the honour and glory of Christ, our blessed lord and saviour.

And as to the worshipping of her in their private devotions, many are the instances that I could offer; but I shall only produce a few from the directions given by one of their own authors, which is to this purpose*. “To have a high value for her sublime dignity; to make a public profession of our high esteem of her incomparable perfections; to express these inward affections, by external acts of the worship of eminent servitude to her; by frequent visiting holy places dedicated to her honour; by a special reverence towards images representing her person; by performing some daily devotion, containing her praises, congratulating her excellencies, or imploring her meditation; and by often calling upon the sacred name of *Mary*; by refer-

referring all the wonderful effects of our predestination to glory, election by grace, and redemption from sin, through the blood of Jesus, to the excellent perfections of *Mary*, as a most effectual means of all." These are some of the public and private devotions taught by them, as to their invoking and worshipping of the blessed virgin. Great therefore is the corruption of that church, which not only suffers such abuses, but avows and encourages them, and even reviles us for not believing and practising such abominations.

But upon what just grounds it is, that we herein depart from them, will plainly appear, by producing some of those reasons, for which we think such worship to be unlawful; and this is the last point to be considered. And because I would bring this discourse within as narrow bounds as possible, the most considerable differences between us in this matter, may be reduced to these particulars. Whether the blessed virgin, has a capacity to understand all the prayers that are every where made to her? Or has any right or title to intercede for us? And what are the reasons and grounds of ascribing to her that authority, which in their public addresses they allow her.

It has been long a question among the votaries of the virgin *Mary*, and the saints, how, or by what means it is, that they understand the prayers every where made to them, by their suppliants on earth? Nor do I find that they are at all likely ever to agree in this point; though they all seem to be well assured, that their prayers are some way or other, most certainly conveyed to them. I shall not here dispute the power of God, as to what he can do in this matter; he may, if he pleases, reveal many of those things to the saints above, which are done by us here; but then we have no proof for this in scripture. To render the prayers
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of all men a wise and rational service, it must be supposed that the saints above, and the blessed virgin, have a certain distinct knowledge of all our actions, words, and thoughts, for they allow of mental, as well as vocal prayer to her. But to ascribe to her such power, is to exalt her above the state of a meer creature, to invest her with some of the incommunicable attributes of God, and to make her, as some do, a *goddess*; which surely cannot be done without great impiety.

One of the greatest reasons why God requires the service of prayer from us, is, because it keeps up in our minds the most lively ideas of his infinite nature, his unbounded providence, and his incomprehensible perfections. For by calling every where upon him, we in effect acknowledge that the immensity of the Godhead, is every where present; by lifting up the aspirations of our hearts towards him, we profess the belief of his omniscience, that he *searcheth the heart, and knoweth the secrets of all the children of men*; by asking all sorts of blessings of him, either to deliver us from evil, or to grant us any good, we own the sovereign authority of his providence over us; we declare his omnipotence, who can do whatever he pleases, and manifest our trust and dependance upon him; and by all creatures doing this, in all places at the same time, we declare the vast capacity of his immense nature, that can at once both hear and answer, whatever requests are made to him.

But to suppose that any meer creature can do this, is to confound that infinite distance, which ought most carefully to be preserved in the minds of men, between God and us; and yet he who prays with any tolerable reason or confidence to the blessed virgin, must suppose, that she is omniscient, immense, omnipresent, and omnipotent; for the very act of calling upon her implies all
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this. It being otherwise a most stupid thing for millions of men hourly to pray to one, who has no power to hear their prayers; to offer up their souls to one that cannot search or know their hearts; and to ask all manner of blessings of one, who has neither ability nor authority to confer them. And though they may pretend, that it is no more to pray to the holy *Mary* in heaven, than to desire the prayers of some friend on earth, yet there is a vast difference between these two; for the one supposes no power or perfection in our friend, but what may safely be ascribed to a creature; whereas the other necessarily implies such perfections, as are peculiar to God only. Therefore to ascribe to the virgin *Mary* a power to receive our prayers, to attend to our petitions, to search our hearts, to know the motions of our souls towards her, and to answer us accordingly, is to raise her above the state of a creature, and consequently is unlawful for us to do it; and let those who presume to practise this consider, that God hath said, *I am the lord, that is my name, and my glory will I not give to another.* I now proceed to consider, what right she has to intercede for us.

By intercession I here mean, such a kind of prayer, as is founded on the merits of the person that intercedes, to plead a right to God's mercy, so as for God to grant us his pardon and forgiveness. And that this is the true notion of the *Roman* church of a mediator in general, and of the blessed virgin when they address her, as their advocate, is very clear from the addresses they make her, and the accounts they give us of this power. For they say, "she has merited all that she asks for us; having offered her merits to be joined with her son's for our salvation, which God has accepted and ratified: and that they thus attribute to the virgin *Mary*, what the holy scriptures have
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every where reserved as the peculiar prerogative of our saviour Christ, appears, from both the old and new testament? St. Paul says, that to us christians, there is *but one God, and but one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all* *. Now, if there be but one mediator, who is the man Christ Jesus, how then is the *virgin Mary* also our advocate in heaven? If the foundation of Christ's intercession for us be built upon his death, as this text plainly declares; and who is our mediator to intercede for us in heaven, because he was our sacrifice and propitiation, or mediator of redemption on earth? if God covenanted with Christ to forgive our sins, upon his laying down his life for us, and he having done this, does therefore now in right of this covenant, represent his death and passion to his father, for our forgiveness: then it must follow, that as the *virgin Mary* has no merits of this kind to plead before God, nor did God ever covenant with her, to accept of any thing she did, in order to our salvation; so neither has she any right to intercede for us in heaven, nor ought we to pray to her, nor can we do it without sin. I proceed to enquire in the last place, whether there be any reason for us to give those titles, and ascribe to her such an authority, as the papists do in their solemn addresses to her.

She is called by them, “the help of christians, the comforter of the afflicted, the refuge of sinners, the gate of heaven, the ark of the covenant;” titles, that alone belong to him, who is the author and finisher of our faith, from whom all help, comfort, and refuge to sinners solely descends. But the attributes which they ascribe to the blessed virgin, are yet more dangerous than all their compellations of her. Such are, first, their
ascrib-

* 1 Tim. 2. 5.

ascribing to her a power, not only to hear their prayers, but to dispense all blessings to them. "Let *Mary* and her son bless us. Hail, holy queen, mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness, and our hope; to thee do we cry; turn then, most gracious advocate, thy merciful eyes towards us." Secondly, of delivering them from danger, "We fly to your protection, O holy mother of God; despise not our prayers, which we make to you in our necessities, but deliver us from all dangers, O ever glorious and blessed virgin! *Mary*, mother of grace, mother of mercy, do thou protect us from our enemies, and receive us in the hour of death." In these, and many other instances, it evidently appears, that they give all those attributes, the power, the glory, to a meer creature, that is only due to God.

Indeed, could the papists prove to us, either that the holy scripture has commanded us to join the merits and intercession of the mother, with those of our saviour, for our salvation; or produce the least example to justify it; if they can give us any shadow of reason why the merits and intercession of Christ should not be alone sufficient to obtain what we want, without the help of the merits and intercessions of any others; if they can shew that our saviour Christ does not love us so well as the *virgin Mary*, nor is so ready to hear and pity us, to accept our prayers and present them to God, as she is; then indeed we ought to look out for a better advocate. But till then, it is enough for us, that we have an advocate, even Jesus Christ our lord, whom we know, and who we are sure does hear us, and who has promised to assist and succour us. Having finished what I proposed, shall now make a few reflections on what has been offered.

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The errors I have been encountering, are of no small concern; they represent to you one of the greatest of sins, the worshipping of the creature with the service due to the creator; and while they have laboured to set up the veneration of the blessed virgin, they have debased and lessened the honour and glory of our lord, to raise hers; for many of that communion shew more piety to *Mary*, than to Christ himself; and place more trust and confidence in her intercession, than in that of the blessed Jesus.

And to add yet further dishonour to our saviour, if we look into their churches, and view their pictures and images, there we every where see holy *Mary* with our saviour still an infant in her arms, as if he was always to be a child; nor is there any thing more common, than in their books of devotion, to hear of the son of God brought down in the arms of his mother, and still behaving as a child, towards her votaries. And what mean and low opinions must such things as these create in superstitious ignorant minds of the saviour of the world; is very natural to conceive? The first rudiments of christianity, are, "thou shalt worship the lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve; how shall they call on him, in whom they have not believed? There is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." This is abundantly sufficient to shew, that they have departed from their first faith, who thus give religious honour to the *virgin Mary*, and set her up as a mediatrix in heaven.

Hence it appears, that we not only had good reason, but that it was also our duty to reform as we did from the church of *Rome*. For if that church was actually erroneous in this point, then it is plain she can err, and is not infallible; and if not infallible, then we ought not to believe what she

she teaches, without examining, whether it be true or false; and the end of all examination being to find out the truth, it must follow, that when we had discovered her to be involved in grievous errors, it was our duty to abandon her corruptions, and to declare against them. This one point alone is a clear vindication of our reformation; sufficient to satisfy any unprejudiced mind, what just cause we had for it. Let us then bless God, who has opened our eyes, to discover those abuses which had almost subverted the chief principles of christianity. Let us value nothing so much as that purity of religion, in which we have the happiness to exceed most christians in the world. Let our adversaries revile us if they please, call us heretics, schismatics, despisers of the church, and haters of the blessed virgin; let them fill heaven and earth against us, because we will not join with them, in these and the like abominations. But let us stand fast in the Lord, and in the religion with we have received from him; always remembering, that though an angel from heaven, even St. *Peter* himself, should come and preach any other gospel, than that of Christ, he is to be accursed.

DISCOURSE XII. Abp. Sharpe.

Of the number of sacraments, and of the
unity and visibilty of the church.

I Cor. 12. 13.

*For by one spirit are we all baptized into one body
whether we be Jews or Gentiles; whether we
be bond or free, and have been all made to drink
into one spirit.*

THE apostle's meaning in these words is, that though there be great variety of conditions and functions among christians, also various gifts and powers bestowed upon men, for discharging those functions; yet all these several sorts of christians, thus variously gifted and qualified, and all the gifts and graces bestowed on them, were solely intended for the public benefit of society. And this he illustrates by a very apt similitude; *as the body, saith he, is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ, that is, all christians, or the christian church. Christ is the head, and all christians are the members, making one society, or corporation. We being many are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another* *.

In this text St. Paul shews, that it was the design of both those sacraments which our Lord appointed in the church, to unite all christians by the means of the spirit to Christ Jesus, and to one another, and so to make them one body; as if he had said, the design of our baptism is by the

* I Cor. 12. 12. Rom. 12. 4, 5.

Disc. XII. *Of the number of sacraments, &c.* 167

the influence of the spirit, to incorporate all believers of what nation, or condition soever, whether *Jews* or *Gentiles*, into one society. By being baptized, they are entred into Christ's church, and made one body; they become members of Christ and of one another. This is likewise the design of the other sacrament, wherein we partake of the cup of the lord; for there also we are made to drink into one spirit. Our eating that bread and drinking that cup, is the means which Christ hath appointed, for our receiving the continual influences of the holy spirit, by which the union that is between Christ and his members, is preserved and maintained. From these words I shall endeavour to clear up several points, in which all christians ought to be rightly informed. And,

First, this text doth fairly ascertain to us, the true number of the christian sacraments, about which there have been so many disputes. The apostle here expressly speaks of the christian sacraments, and of no more than two; *baptism* and the *supper of the lord*. These are sacraments, truly and properly so called, being outward signs and pledges of an inward grace co-operating with them, and were expressly instituted by Christ; and by the very words of the institution, it appears, that they were designed to be of perpetual obligation, even to the world's end. But the new testament is quite silent, as to any more sacraments than these; and yet the council of *Trent*, which is the rule of the *Roman* church, hath obliged all of her communicants, to receive and own seven sacraments. This is a very hard and severe imposition upon the christian faith; and we challenge any man to produce any one council, or father, or even a single writer for eleven hundred years after Christ, that asserted, there were seven sacraments of Christ's institution. *Peter Lombard* in the twelfth century,

was

was the first who mentioned this number. But should the bare opinion of one man, at such a distance from the primitive church, be a sufficient authority to ground an article of faith upon, and to make it damnable to believe otherwise?

But it is urged that the ancient fathers give the name of sacraments, to marriage, to orders, to penance, and such others as that church hath established for sacraments. In answer to this I say, that if they will make a sacrament of every thing the fathers call so, they may as well make seven and twenty as seven sacraments. Fasting, praying, weeping, washing the disciples feet, crossing themselves, and vowing virginity, might as well have been made sacraments, as the five they have obtruded upon us; because all these are called sacraments by some father or other. Nay, the scripture, and the religion of Christ are sacraments with some of them. But for sacraments so truly called, and what the word properly signifies, namely, such outward visible signs, symbols, or elements as were appointed by Christ, for conveying of spiritual grace to all who worthily partake of them; in this notion of sacraments, we can find no more, either in scripture or the fathers, than those two, *baptism* and the *lord's supper*. St. *Cyrian* doubtless thought so, when he tells us, "that then men may be thoroughly sanctified, and become the children of God, if they be regenerated by both the sacraments." And says St. *Austin*, "our Lord Jesus Christ hath knit christians together with sacraments, which are most few in number, most easy to be observed, most excellent in signification, and these are *Baptism* and the *Lord's supper*.—These are the two sacraments of the church". So that the church of *Rome*, without the authority of the scriptures, or of one single author for above a thousand years together, against

the reason of the thing, and the sense of the primitive fathers, makes it an article of faith necessary to salvation, to believe that Christ ordained seven true and proper sacraments, when by all that appears, he ordained but two; and let all indifferent persons judge, whether it be reasonable without better evidence, to submit our judgment and consciences to such an assumed authority? I proceed,

Secondly, to shew that the words in my text will help us to give a plain and true account of a considerable article of our faith, namely, the unity of the catholic church. *We are all baptized into one body, and made to drink into one spirit.* Here is a plain declaration and assertion of an article of our creed, concerning the unity of the church. *I do believe in one catholic and apostolic church.* And if we took no other guide but the holy scriptures for the meaning of this article, it would appear extremely plain; and yet through the different interests of men, it is become a bone of contention and a very intricate controversy.

But it is clear from scripture, that it was the design of Christ to deliver to mankind the whole will of God, so far as concerned their salvation. To reveal to them all that was necessary to be believed or practised, in order to their future happiness. These things thus revealed, we call the christian religion, and which was taught to the world by Christ and his apostles, and being put into writing by inspired men, is now contained in the books of holy scripture. And it was our Lord's design, that all who embraced this religion should be united among themselves under him their head, and so become one body, by the means of one holy spirit which should actuate and influence them; and this is that *one body*, and *one spirit*, which the apostle speaks of. And our Lord further intended, that all who believed and professed his religion, should be admitted

to a participation of this spirit, and made members of this common body, by the sacrament of baptism; and also be continued and maintained in this membership, and receive continual influence from the same spirit, and by eating and drinking in the sacrament of the communion. This is what the text means, *that we are all by one spirit baptized into one body, and made to drink into one spirit*; and therefore what the scripture intends, by saying the church is *one*, can be nothing else but the whole multitude of people, whether *Jews*, or *Gentiles*, who do embrace and profess the christian religion, and are joined by means of the sacraments, into one body or society, under one head Christ Jesus. Though this be the general notion of the church, yet it may not be amiss to treat of this matter a little more particularly, that every one may fully understand the nature of that church, which we profess to believe; and we shall certainly find enough in the holy scriptures, to satisfy all our scruples in this affair.

The first time our saviour makes mention of a church, was before he actually had one in the world. It was when St. *Peter* publicly confessed him to be the Christ, the son of God. “Verily I say unto thee, thou art *Peter*, and upon this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*.” And the commission he afterwards gave his apostles, about the building of this church was; “go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the father, and of the son, and of the holy ghost; and teaching them to observe whatever I have commanded you; and lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world†.” This commission of our saviour, we may properly stile the charter of the church, wherein he declares the extent of it, and of what persons he would have it constituted. It was to extend

* Mat. 16. 18. † 28. 19. 20.

extend through all the world, to be made up of all nations, and to be built and constituted by the apostles. All persons were to be received into it upon condition of their becoming the disciples of Jesus Christ, and engaging to observe all he had commanded. He also here declares the form or method, by which persons were to be admitted into this church; which was by being baptized in the name of the father, of the son, and of the holy ghost. Lastly, he here promises the perpetual presence of his holy spirit, both to assist the apostles and their successors, in the building and governing this church, and also to actuate and enliven all its members. Since then that Christ before he left the world, promised a church should be built, and gave a commission for doing it; let us see how this promise was fulfilled, and commission executed, and how this church was actually built and constituted.

And we may find in the second of the *Acts*, that in pursuance of a commission given to the apostles, they and the disciples met at *Jerusalem* on the day of *Pentecost*, when the holy spirit, as Christ had promised, did descend upon the apostles, and endued them with the power of speaking all languages, that so they might be enabled to execute the commission of preaching to all nations; and then and there did St. *Peter* (to whom Christ had promised the honour of laying the foundation of his church, for his generous confessing of him) begin to preach the religion of Christ to the Jews, (as he afterwards did to the *Gentiles*, *Acts* 10.) exhorting them to repent and embrace the christian faith, and *to be baptized every one of them in the name of the Lord Jesus, for the remission of their sins*, ver. 38. The event of which sermon was, that “they who gladly received his words, were baptized, and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls, ver. 41. Who continued stedfastly in the

apostles doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayer, ver. 42. And the Lord added to the church, daily such as should be saved, ver. 47."

Here is the first time we read in the new testament of a church actually built and constituted, and we see plainly, that it was constituted by such officers, of such members, and with such rites and ceremonies, as Christ had ordained in his general charter before mentioned. All persons whatsoever, that upon the apostles preaching, did embrace the christian religion and were baptized, all these together with the apostles, made up *one church*. They exercised this church membership by an outward profession of the christian religion, there called the apostles doctrine; and by joining with them in the sacrament of the Lord's supper, there called breaking of bread, and in public prayers. And to this church thus inconsiderable at first, were daily added others, till in process of time it grew to that bulk in which we now see it. Indeed, the first apostolical church was not called catholic or universal, (both which words mean the same thing, the difference being only, that the one word is *Greek*, and the other *Latin*) but the *church*, or the *church of God*, without any other epithet. And there was good reason for this, because this church was then, and for some time after, confined to the nation of the *Jews*. But when this church encreased so, that many cities and nations were incorporated into it, each of which were properly churches of Christ, then in contradistinction to those particular churches, came up the title of catholic or universal church, by which is meant, the whole multitude of christians throughout the world, that are entered into one society, under their head Christ Jesus, by baptism, and the profession of the christian faith, and the participation of the common means of salvation. But when we
speak

Speak of a church of any single denomination, as the *Greek*, the *Roman* church, the church of *England*, or the like, we mean only some particular church, which is a part of the catholic or universal church. The catholic or universal church neither is, nor can be, but *one*; because all christians in the world belong to it, and that is the church, which we profess to believe in our creeds. But particular churches are as many as the nations are, that profess the christian religion. But yet all churches, whether *diocesan*, provincial, or national, are only parts of the universal church, just as our several limbs and members are part of our bodies.

And thus I have given you the true notion of the church, which the scripture always intends when it mentions the church in general, when it speaks of the church *as the body of Christ*; as "that which Christ purchased with his blood; as the church into which we were baptized, and to which all those promises are made of the forgiveness of sins, of the perpetual presence and assistance of the holy spirit, of the gates of hell never prevailing against it, and of everlasting salvation in the world to come." By this church is always meant all christians throughout the world, who profess the common faith, though perhaps not without mixture of error, and enjoy the administration of the word and sacraments; all these wherever they live, or by what name soever distinguished, make up together that one body of Christ, which we call the catholic church.

And from what has been said, we may be able not only to give an answer to that question with which the papists continually tamper our people, namely, where that one apostolic church is, which we profess to believe in our creed; but also to shew how impertinent it is to their purpose. Let us then examine what weight and moment there is

in this question, which seems just such another as this; since there is but one city of *London*, but abundance of streets, lanes and alleys in it, some of which are well built, and others ruinous, some healthful, and perhaps others visited with contagious distempers; now in which of all these is the true city of *London* to be found? And would not any wise man think this a very idle question? For though some of these places may be more safe, convenient and uniform than others, yet they are all parts of the same city, but none singly taken is that city. The same answer may be given to the question before us; where that church is to be found which we profess to believe in our creeds? Namely, that church which we believe in our creeds, is the catholic or universal church of Christ, into which all christians are baptized, and which therefore is not to be confined to *England*, or the reformation abroad; nor to *Rome*, or those of her communion; nor to the *East* or *West-Indies*; but it is in these and all other places, where christians do profess the common faith of Christ, and partake of the same sacraments under their lawful governors, though many of them are divided in communion one from another. So that in all places under heaven, where there are such people, there is a true church of Christ, but not the whole church of Christ, because what we call the catholic church is made up of all these churches; only let me observe, that though in all those places the church is to be found, yet there is a part of this church in some of those places, which is far more pure, holy, and apostolical, than it is in other places. And of all these churches, the faith professed by the church of *Rome*, has the greatest mixture of errors and corruptions.

Let any one judge then, whether the question I have been considering of, be not really weak in
itself

itself and very impertinent. For notwithstanding this question be fully answered, yet the disputes between us and the church of *Rome*, are still the same. And though we own them to be truly a church, as we do the eastern and western churches, yet we dare not communicate with them. For our complaints still remain against their usurpations, against their imposing innumerable new doctrines for articles of faith, which the scriptures and the primitive church never taught; against their worshipping of images and invocation of saints; of having the public service of the church in an unknown tongue, and depriving the people of half the sacraments, and other such things. We, indeed, say they are truly a church, that is, part of the catholic church, because we think they retain all the fundamentals of the christian religion. But we cannot be of their communion, unless they withdraw their unlawful, unscriptural impositions, from being terms of their communion; or satisfy us, which they never can do, that the things which they impose on us, and we except against, are really agreeable to the word of God.

But say some, how is it possible that there should be but one church, and yet so many different communions amongst those that pretend to be of that church? Surely only one of these communions can be the true church. To this I answer, that no reason can be assigned, why churches of different communions may notwithstanding be true parts of the catholic church, so long as they have the essentials of a true church before mentioned. Indeed so long as divisions and separations remain, there is a criminal schism lies somewhere. But still these schismatical churches are parts of the catholic church, though corrupt and degenerate ones. Their schism doth not cut them off from being members of Christ's kingdom. It is certain there were separa-

tions, and schisms, and different communions even in the most primitive times of christianity; and that great schism in the church of *Corinth*, occasioned two famous epistles, one from *St. Paul*, another from *St. Clement* to that church. But we do not read in either of these epistles, that the schismatics were no christians, or out of the pale of the church.

And was it true, as the church of *Rome* pretends, that there can be but one true church, I solemnly declare, that was I now to chuse my communion out of all the churches in *Christendom*, that of the church of *Rome*, as now established, should be the last I would join myself to; and my reason is, that if either heresy or schism destroys a church, and cuts off the members of it from the body of Christ, I should more suspect that communion upon both these accounts, than any other. For if it be heresy to teach doctrines of religion that are not true, and religious practices that are not safe; if it be heresy to declare new articles of faith as necessary to salvation, which neither Christ, nor his apostles, nor the primitive church ever declared to be such; then I fear the *Roman* church hath gone as far towards making herself guilty of heresy, as any of the several communions in *Christendom*, even the most erroneous. But as for schism she hath gone a great way farther; we all agree that schism is an unnecessary causeless separation from a church, with which we are bound to communicate. Now supposing all churches are bound to be of one communion, yet when a separation happens, that church can only be guilty of schism, which is the cause or occasion of that separation.

And this is really the case between the church of *Rome*, and those who differ from her. The church of *Rome*, taking in *all nations* that now adhere to her

her, is about one fourth part of those who profess the faith of Christ, and yet all these are divided from her. Now here is a schism, and the question is, at whose door it lies? Why certainly at *that Church*, which hath imposed new terms of communion, never heard of in the primitive times; that church, which taking advantages of the smallness of some churches, and the distresses of others, hath erected an universal monarchy over the christian world, and instead of being thought only a part of the catholic church, will needs be the whole, and excommunicate all those who refuse to yield obedience to the bishop of *Rome*, as the vicar of Christ, and the only visible head of the church; I say this usurping monopolizing church is in all reason the schismatic; and not those other churches that she excludes from her communion.

But there is another argument urged by the papists; say they, "if you deny the church of *Rome* to be the only true visible church, then shew us a visible church opposing the church of *Rome* in those points you differ from them, from the time of Christ, till the reformation. For if there was not a time when there was no christian church, but that of *Rome*, then that is the true church, or Christ had no visible one upon earth." In answer to this, let us suppose, that all the churches of the world, from Christ's time to this, had agreed with the church of *Rome* in all points of doctrine and practice, doth it from thence follow, that the church of *Rome* is the only visible church? Surely not. For she is but a part of the visible church; and the other churches are as much parts of it as she; why then is she any more the whole visible church than they? Or why are not they as much the visible church after they are divided, as they were before, supposing the fault was hers, and

not theirs, that occasioned this division and separation? And if the visible church can be but in one communion, why are not those the only true catholic visible church, which separate from the church of *Rome*, and she no part of it; since she hath caused the schism? These questions naturally answer themselves.

I shall conclude this discourse in the words of an ingenious writer *. “ The unity of the church, according to the institution of Christ, and as the primitive fathers understood it, consists in an unity in faith, and in the mutual love and good correspondence of Christians with their sister churches; and do this, though one sister may be elder than another, and *Rome* was not the eldest; one also might be greater or more powerful than another, and this varied according to the course of this world. *Jerusalem* was at first the only church of Christ, then *Antioch* became the greatest of the gentile churches, where christianity first received its name; afterwards *Rome* became the greatest, from being the seat of the *Roman* empire. But *Constantinople* was the first that assumed an universal supremacy, when she became the head of that empire. And this was what broke the unity of the sister churches, and filled them with schisms and divisions among themselves; one affecting superiority over another, and encreasing it to an absolute temporal dominion, of which Christ said to the apostles, *it shall not be so among you*†. And after the institution and celebration of the lord’s supper, just as he was going to enter upon his sacred passion, and to take his final leave of them, they contended *which of them should be the greatest*, and then was the time to determine it, if ever; but he again checked their
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* *Lesley’s case stated*, p. 192. † *Mat.* 20.
26.

ambition, and the error of their thought, as if the church were to be governed with temporal authority, and told them plainly, *ye shall not be so**.

And in his farewell sermon, he insisted much upon their unity, and placed it not upon the superiority of any one over the other, but in their mutual love and good agreement with each other, in their union with God and himself. *A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another†.* This is the unity of which Christ speaks in his last words to the apostles. He said, *my kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight.* But he that calls himself *servus servorum*, the servant of servants, has fought and raised bloody wars in defence, as he says, of this his master's kingdom; and he will have the government of it to consist, like the kingdoms of this world, in being under one absolute and despotic head or king. But no kingdom of the earth will content him. He will be universal monarch of the whole world; and why? Because Christ is the head of all churches, and therefore must have an universal vicar. For the same reason then, because God is the king of all the earth, therefore he must have an universal vicar in temporals. And if *England, France, Spain, &c.* should contend which of them was this universal vicar, would not the answer be easy, that the contest was vain and foolish? For the one kingdom may be greater or more ancient than another, yet it is still but a part of the whole world; and that God hath appointed no such universal vicar. The case is exactly parallel, unless it can be proved, that Christ has appointed such

* Luke 22. 26.

† John 13. 34.

an universal vicar in the church, and plainly told us who he was, that we may obey him.

But if Christ has appointed no such universal vicar, then do the church of *Rome* greatly err concerning the unity of the church, which they place wholly upon our being united in obedience to such an one; and she is the great breaker of ecclesiastical unity, while she will admit of no sister church, but will be the mother of all churches, though she be not the eldest: nor is there the least ground for this universal supremacy, either in the holy scriptures, or in antiquity, or in the reason of the thing, or in fact, since the first foundation of christianity to this day; or was it ever acknowledged, or is now by the majority of christian churches; and yet this is the cause of all the disputes between the church of *Rome*, and all other christian churches."

DIS-

DISCOURSE XIII. Abp. Sharpe.

Of transubstantiation.

1 Cor. 11. 23, 24, 25.

For I have received of the lord, that which I also delivered to you, that the lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you, this do in remembrance of me.

After the same manner also, he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, this cup is the new testament in my blood; this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.

IN this sacrament of the lord's supper, according to our saviour's institution, there is a material, and a spiritual part; a sign and the thing signified; the bread and wine to be received by us, in commemoration of the body and blood of Christ crucified for us on the cross. But the papists teach, that immediately upon saying the words of consecration, what before was bread and wine, is turned into the very body and blood of Christ; and this mystery they call *Transubstantiation*. A mystery as unintelligible as is the word, and which will be for ever a bone of contention, a wall of separation, between them and the rest of mankind, that will not renounce their senses and reason; and so long as this article of faith is made a condition of their communion, we must not upon any terms, join with them.

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The doctrine of transubstantiation, is thus represented by the council of *Trent*. “ If any one shall deny, that in the sacrament of the eucharist, there is contained, truly, really and substantially the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity of our lord Christ; let him be accursed. If any shall deny, that in the sacrament the whole Christ is contained in either kind, and in every part of either kind, when one part is separated from the other; let him be accursed. If any one shall say, that in the sacrament, after the words of consecration are said, there is not the body and blood of Christ, save only while they are taken and received, but that they are not there, either before or after; or that the true body of Christ doth not remain in the consecrated wafers that are left after the communion; let him be accursed.”—From hence may be inferred the following particulars.

First, that after the words of consecration are said, there is no bread or wine left upon the table. Secondly, that instead of bread and wine, by virtue of five words, there is the substance of the body and blood of Christ, together with his soul and divinity. Thirdly, that as this body and blood is whole, in the bread and wine, and as both are whole in the bread alone, so it is whole in every crumb of that bread; and that the body of Christ is eaten by every communicant, both good and bad. Fourthly, that this body remains in the wafers not eaten, so that if a mouse after the sacrament should eat one of these wafers, it would as really eat the body of Christ, as any christian; or, if the wafer was burnt, then the body of Christ would be really burnt. Lastly, this change, or conversion of the whole substance of bread and wine, into the whole substance of the body and blood of Christ, together with his soul and divinity, is by the catholick church, called *transubstantiation*.
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By this account we may learn what that hard word means, and what the doctrine of the church of *Rome* is in this matter ; and I dare be bold to say, that there never was any mystery in any religion in the world, so unintelligible, so unconceiveable, so contradictory both to sense and reason, as this is. No *Jew*, no *Turk*, no *Pagan*, so far as we can learn from history, ever had in their creeds, an article so hard to be believed.

My present business then shall be to shew, first, That the doctrine of transubstantiation has no countenance from scripture, or these words of Christ, *this is my body*. Secondly, That this artifice tends to overthrow the christian religion. For if transubstantiation be true, we cannot prove that christianity is true. Thirdly, I will shew the insufficiency of their plea, in favour of this doctrine, taken from the unaccountableness and unconceiveableness of several others of the gospel doctrines. Of these points in their order.

The chief argument of the *Romanists* for transubstantiation, is our saviour's words when he instituted the sacrament ; which they think are so full for the conversion of bread and wine, into the body and blood of Christ, that they wonder how any protestant can deny it ; and say they, shall we believe Jesus Christ, or our own carnal reason against his words ? To this we protestants answer, that whatever Christ said we are to believe ; and that when he said, *this is my body*, he spake nothing but what was true, plain, and obvious. But then we insist, that this does not make any thing for transubstantiation, but quite the reverse ; that the sense in which protestants expound them, is by far the plainest, easiest, most natural and proper ; and that the *Romish* sense makes our saviour speak against all the rules of speech. In order then to find out the meaning
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ing of our saviour's words, *this is my body*, it will be proper to fix their true sense.

The word *this* in common speech is used to point out something which is present, that we would take notice of. If I hold a bible and say, *this is the word of God*, all would think I spoke of the book, which I had in my hand; when our saviour therefore said to his disciples, *this is my body*, he certainly meant to shew them something that was present; and we find that he had bread in his hand. He took bread and blessed it; and gave this bread to his disciples after he had broken it, and bid them take and eat of it; and then adds, for *this is my body*: by which he must certainly mean, according to all the rules of speech, the bread which he had in his hand, which he had blessed, broken, and bid them eat of; nor could the apostles understand him otherwise. St. Paul also, an infallible interpreter of our saviour's words, plainly tells us, that what is eaten in the holy supper is bread, and calls it so three times; "as often, says he, as ye eat this bread and drink this cup; whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup unworthily; let a man examine himself, and so let him eat this bread, and drink this cup*." So that our saviour having consecrated the bread, bids his disciples eat of it, telling them it was *his body*. St. Paul saith, that what is eaten in the sacrament is *bread*. The consecrated bread is what our saviour calls his body; as if he had said, *this bread which I have blessed, and broken, and which I give you; this bread is my body*.

I now proceed to consider, in what sense our saviour's words, *my body*, is here to be taken. The Romanists break off at *this is my body*; but the intire sentence is this; *this is my body given for you, or, this is my body broken for you*. It is plain
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* 1 Cor. 11. 26, 27, 28.

our saviour doth not here speak of his body absolutely, but under this particular consideration, *his body as given for us*; that is, as offered up to God in sacrifice for us: so that Christ never said simply of the bread, *this is my body*; but, *this is my body given, or broken for you*; that is, the communion bread is his body, not living, but dead in our stead. This is confirmed, by what our saviour saith of the cup; that it is the *blood of the new testament shed for them*; that is, *shed for the remission of our sins*. I now come to the main question between us and the papists, namely, in what sense our saviour said of the consecrated bread, that it was his *dead body*. They contend for a literal sense; we say our saviour spoke by a figure, and such an one, as is most common, and which may be easily understood; and whether of these senses come nearest to truth, I will now examine: only let it be remembered, that when our saviour said, *this is my body*, he spoke of the bread; and when he said, that the bread was his body, he spoke of his body not living, but sacrificed for our redemption; allowing this, the two following consequences will be evident, first, that the papists sense of the words, by which alone they can prove transubstantiation, is impossible, full of nonsense and contradiction. Secondly, that the sense in which protestants understand the words, is natural, easy and agreeable to the common way of speaking; and the only sense in which the apostles could possibly understand our lord.

If we take our saviour's words in a literal sense, as the *Romanists* do, we must suppose him to speak thus. "This bread which I have blessed and broken, and commanded you to eat of, is not bread, but really, and truly my dead body; my body sacrificed for you." But this is perfect nonsense, and it was impossible for his disciples thus to understand

stand him ; and it is making our saviour to say contrary things at the same time ; for it could not be at once both bread and the body of Christ : and he speaks in the present tense, *this is* ; not, *this will be*. When therefore our saviour says, *this is my body*, he could not speak it in a literal sense, without making him either to speak a contradiction, or what was false ; unless that bread and our saviour's body are one and the same thing, which no one ever asserted. But suppose, that when Christ said, *this is my body*, that the bread in his hands immediately became his very body ; yet how could it be his dead body, given, or broken, or sacrificed for them ? That our saviour spoke of his body under that consideration, I have already shewed, and no doubt his disciples so understood him. But then they could not take his words in a literal sense ; because they knew, and saw that he was alive, that his body was not broken, nor his blood shed ; and they could not believe that his body was both alive and dead at the same time. It is certain then, that they understood them in a figurative sense, which is what protestants contend for ; who interpret the words to this effect. That this bread which he had broken and blessed, did shew forth and represent his body broken for us ; and by our eating of this broken bread, according to his command, we are made partakers of the benefits of his sacrificed body. This is so easy a sense of the words, that the apostles could not understand them otherwise.

And it is a figure of speech very common among men, to give to the sign the name of the thing signified. Thus when we shew a picture of any one, we are apt to say, this is such a person, or when a map is before us, to say, this is such a country ; and yet no one thinks we mean that such a picture is really the person it represents,

sents, or that a map is really the country of which we are speaking. But we only mean to give the name of the person or thing represented, to what it does represent. And as this is an ordinary figure in common speech, so is it in the language of scripture; I mean, that the sign or figure of the thing, is called by the name of the thing itself. Thus *Joseph* expounded *Pharoah's* dream, *the seven fat kine are seven years* *. Thus *Daniel* unfolded *Nebuchadnezzar's* dreams, of the image and the tree; "thou art this head of gold, and the tree which thou sawest, it is thou, O king †." Thus also our saviour says, "the field is the world, the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the tares are the children of the wicked one: the harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers are the angels ‡." And speaking of himself, "I am the door, I am the vine, I am the good shepherd." And *St. Paul* calls Christ a *Rock*. In these and many other instances, the scriptures give to the sign or figure, the name of the thing which it represents or signifies; and our saviour's words, *this is my body*, ought to be taken in the same figurative sense; and for this further reason, because this was the language used by the *Jews* in their sacraments, particularly in that which the apostles had just then celebrated.

God had appointed two sacraments to the *Jews*, circumcision and the passover, to both which the scriptures and the *Jews* from them, gave the name of the thing which they signified and sealed. [Circumcision, which was only the sign and seal of God's covenant with the *Jews*, answering to our baptism, is called the covenant. "This is my covenant, every male-child among you shall be circumcised, and my co-

venant

* Gen. 41. 26. † Dan. 2. 38. 4. 5. 20. 22.

‡ Mat. 13. 38, 39. John 10. 7. 15. 1. 10. 14.

venant shall be in your flesh †." But all know that circumcision was not God's covenant, but only the sign of it. Thus also the paschal feast, from whence our saviour took the sacrament of the lord's supper, is called the passover, by the same figure. For the paschal lamb with which the *Jews* celebrated this sacrament, was not the passover itself, but only a sign or memorial of it; yet God himself calls this feast, *the lord's passover* *. And every year when the lamb was set upon the table, the master of the house said, *this is the passover, which we therefore eat because God passed by our houses in Egypt*; which form of words our saviour observed, when he kept this feast with his disciples. But the lamb upon the table was not really the lord's passover, for that deliverance God wrought for them many years before; but only a memorial of that passover, a sacrament instituted to commemorate that deliverance or passover.

Since then God first used this expression, and that it was continued by the *Jews*, no doubt but that the apostles, when our saviour said of the bread, *this is my body*, understood the words in the same sense as we do. For as the *Jews* when they celebrated their sacrament of the paschal feast, which commemorated that great deliverance which God had wrought for them from their *Egyptian* bondage, heard our saviour say of the bread, *this is the bread of affliction which your fathers eat in Egypt*; and of the flesh, *this is the lord's passover*: so after this sacrament was finished, they saw our saviour take of the same bread, and blessed it as before, with a design to make a new sacrament, wherein they and all christians were to commemorate the death and sacrifice of the paschal lamb, of which the other was a type; whereby all true *Israelites* were to be delivered from the spiritual bondage

† Gen. 17. 10, 13. * Exod. 12. 11.

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of sin and Satan ; and having blessed the bread, he bids them eat of it, saying, *this is my body broken for you*. Now would not any one understand this latter expression of his, in the same sense they did the former ; namely, that the bread now blessed by Christ, and broke, was just as much his body broken, as the bread they before did eat, was the bread of affliction, which their fathers eat in *Egypt* ; or as the lamb was the lord's passover ? And we may as well imagine, that the disciples understood by these words, *this is the lord's pass-over*, that the destroying angel was then passing over the houses of the *Israelites*, and slaying the first born of the *Egyptians* ; as to suppose, that by these words of our saviour, *this is my body broken for you*, he meant his real, natural body, which was not then crucified.

Having thus fully proved, that Christ's words in the institution, *this is my body*, does not make for, but effectually overthrow the doctrine of transubstantiation, and that the apostles could not possibly understand them in any other sense, but what we protestants do ; I proceed to shew, that the article of transubstantiation tends to destroy the evidence of the christian religion. If this popish doctrine be true, we cannot possibly be assured that christianity is true. For what are the grounds upon which we believe the christian faith, or would persuade others to do it ? If we would give a reasonable answer to this, we must say, that the ground upon which we believe Christ's religion, is the testimony of the apostles, and others who lived in the time of our saviour, who heard him publish his doctrine, and were witnesses of the proofs he gave of it ; all which being committed to writing, we may safely believe such writings, upon the credit and authority of universal tradition, to be sincerely conveyed down to us : not but that there are a great

great many other collateral evidences of the truth of christianity.

But how shall we be sure the apostles and others were not imposed upon? All the answer we can give to this is, that it is impossible they should be mistaken, because they had the evidence of their senses for what they believed and reported to us. They heard with their ears Christ preach such doctrines as we now call articles of our faith, which their reason told them were good in themselves, and agreeable to the doctrine of the prophets. They saw with their eyes the proofs Christ gave of them, being present at the mighty miracles he wrought. They saw him cast out devils, raise the dead, cure all diseases, and giving other evidences of a divine power. Lastly, having seen him put to death, they had all their senses to witness, that he was raised from the dead, and conversed with them for many days; on the evidence of our senses, therefore we are to fix the first grounds of our faith. The apostles and first christians, who conveyed our religion to us, did believe it, because of what they saw, heard, and felt; upon the credit of their senses, they were assured that what they delivered to posterity, concerning Jesus and his religion, was true; and which is the only possible evidence for the truth of any divine revelation: and the apostles when they would persuade men to christianity, always proceeded upon this ground. They were *eye and ear witnesses of what Jesus did and taught*, and of his resurrection from the dead; and therefore declared to all the world, that he was the messiah. *That which we have heard and seen with our eyes, and looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life, that we declare unto you* *.

If

* 1 John 1. 1, 3.

If then the ground of our faith be the truth of our senses, whoever teacheth any doctrine that supposeth our senses may be deceived, or that we are not to believe them, doth so far overthrow the ground of our faith. The doctrine of transubstantiation doth quite take away the doctrine of our senses; for it teacheth, that what to all our senses appears to be plain bread and wine, is really not bread and wine, but a very different thing, even the body and blood of Christ which is in heaven; so that this doctrine tends to take away all the evidence we have for the belief of christianity. For if this doctrine be true, then neither the apostles, nor any others could be certain, that what they thought they saw, and heard concerning Jesus Christ was true, much less could they persuade others that what they taught concerning him, was a real truth. So that if transubstantiation be true, it can never be made appear that christianity is so; because that being supposed, the credit of our senses is taken away; and yet upon their credit the truth of christianity, and our belief of it, is founded.—But I proceed to shew the insufficiency of their plea in favour of transubstantiation, taken from the unaccountableness or inconceivableness of several others of our saviour's doctrine.

When we urge to them, that transubstantiation is unintelligible and full of contradictions, to this they reply; “will you be a christian or not? If you will, you must be led by faith, and not by sense; you must believe what God hath said, and not what your own carnal, fallible reason will suggest; you cannot conceive how what appears bread, should be the true real body of Christ, which is in heaven; why, can you conceive many of the mysteries of christianity? Is not our saviour's incarnation, the manner how God and man can be one person, as great and unaccountable a secret? Are you not as much at a loss, to reconcile the
doctrine

doctrine of the blessed trinity with your reason, as in the present case? Can you or any one give a more intelligible account of that mystery than we can do of transubstantiation? Will not the notion of three in one, be eternally as great a contradiction, as it is that the body of Christ should be in a thousand places at once? Believe therefore what God has said to be true how impossible soever it seems to be; we are not to dispute, but submit to God's assertion?"—All this is plausibly said, and will perhaps take with unwary persons. But let us consider, that there is a vast difference between the things we charge them with, and what they offer for the defence of themselves.

For the doctrines of the trinity, and of Christ's incarnation, how inconceivable soever they be, are plainly and evidently delivered in scripture; and we must deny the authority of God's book, if we deny them; they being the first principles of christianity, and set down in the new testament as such; and none ever rejected them, but were declared heretics for so doing. Whereas transubstantiation, has no foundation in scripture, and is directly contrary to our saviour's words, as I have sufficiently proved; nor was this doctrine ever known to the fathers, till above eight hundred years after Christ, but is a perfect novelty, first established by the council of *Lateran*, which decreed the lawfulness of deposing princes, and absolving subjects from their allegiance, in case of heresy; so that to name transubstantiation, with those other christian doctrines, as to their authority from scripture, is downright impudence.

But there is this further difference between transubstantiation, and the mysteries of the gospel, that the first is a matter, that plainly falls under our senses, but the other does not. This ought to be well considered in this controversy: it is no wonder

wonder we cannot fathom the depth of the trinity, because God is an infinite being, and our understandings are all finite. We may as well think to contain the ocean in a shell, as fully and adequately to comprehend the nature of God, by our shallow understandings. The object is too great for us, and if we will be too curious and inquisitive, it is but just, that we should be entangled in our own nets. We know no more of God's nature, than what he is pleased to discover to us, and ought therefore to believe what he hath certainly revealed; and this though we cannot comprehend what he hath revealed concerning himself, nor reconcile it with our shallow reason; because there is an infinite disproportion between the object, and the faculty to be employed about it. But when we talk of transubstantiation, the thing is very different. This is a just object of sense, nay, of all the five senses; if we can judge of any thing at all, surely we may of the reality of a piece of bread, or a cup of wine; if we are not competent judges of what falls under our senses, we must suspend all manner of determination concerning things to the end of the world. Let not the *Romanists* then say, that our not being able to give an account of the trinity, is as much an argument against the truth of that mystery, as our not being able to give an account of transubstantiation is an argument against that; because you see there is an infinite disparity in the two instances. If the nature of God fell under our senses, and was to be judged of by them, as all bodies are, we would not contest it with them; but the case is quite otherwise, God is infinite, and we are finite, and therefore he exceeds our measure. But the things exposed to our senses, are like ourselves, and our senses were given us to judge about them.

Lastly, the papists say, we may as well refuse to believe the trinity, as transubstantiation, because they are equally against reason, equally contradictory. But this we deny, for we can shew many impossibilities and contradictions in their doctrine of transubstantiation, evident to common sense and reason, and such as they can no way get clear of, with all the subtleties, niceties, and distinctions, they can possibly use. But they cannot shew us any such contradictions and impossibilities in the doctrine of the trinity, nor in any other mystery of christianity. There is no doctrine revealed by Christ, but we can from scripture give such an account of it, as that no man can charge any absurdity upon it. Though we cannot prove it by reason, yet when God hath once revealed it, we can prove that it is not contrary to reason; and how intricate soever the papists think the trinity to be, yet it was owned and believed for some ages, by the wisest and most learned of the heathens themselves, even those who were the greatest enemies to christianity; and surely these did not think it against, but highly agreeable to reason. But this cannot be said of transubstantiation, for I challenge the *Romanists* to shew, when, or where, either *Pagan*, or *Turk*, or *Jew*, or any one but a papist, did, or could believe so absurd a doctrine as transubstantiation.

How great a scandal this monstrous doctrine reflects upon our common christianity, may appear from one single instance, which I will give you in the words of a learned writer *. “It is a very severe saying of *Averroes*, the *Arabian* philosopher, (who lived after this doctrine was entertained among christians) and ought to make the church of *Rome* blush, if she can. *I have travelled*, says he, *over the world, and have found diverse sects;* but

* *Tillotson* of transubstan. p. 312.

but so sottish a sect or law, I never found, as is the sect of the christians; because with their own teeth, they devour their God whom they worship. — And to speak the plain truth, the christian religion was never so horribly exposed to the scorn of atheists and infidels, as it hath been by this most absurd and senseless doctrine. But thus it was foretold, that the *man of sin* should come, with power, and signs, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness, with all the ledgerdmain and juggling tricks of falshood and imposture; amongst which this of transubstantiation, which they call a *miracle*, and we a *cheat*, is one of the chief. And in all probability, those common juggling words of *hocus pocus*, are nothing but a corruption of *hoc est corpus*, by way of ridiculous imitation of the priests of the church of *Rome*, in their trick of transubstantiation; into such contempt by this foolish doctrine and pretended miracle of theirs, have they brought the most sacred and venerable mystery of our religion.”

“ It is scandalous also upon account of the cruel and bloody consequences of this doctrine; so contrary to the plain laws of christianity, and to one great end and design of this sacrament, which is to unite christians in the most perfect love and charity to one another; whereas this doctrine hath been the occasion of the most barbarous and bloody tragedies, that ever were acted in the world. For this hath been in the church of *Rome* the great burning article; and as absurd and unreasonable as it is, more christians have been murdered for the denial of it, than perhaps for all the other articles of their religion. — O blessed saviour! thou best friend and greatest lover of mankind; who can imagine thou didst ever intend, that men should kill one another, for not being able to believe contrary to their senses; for being unwilling to

think, that thou shouldst make one of the most horrid and barbarous things that can be imagined, a main duty and principal mystery of thy religion; for not flattering the pride and presumption of the priest, who says, he can make God; and for not complying with the folly and stupidity of the people, who are made to believe that they can eat him."

DISCOURSE XIV. Abp. Sharpe.

Of adoring the host, and of the real presence.

1 Cor. 11. 23, 24, 25.

For I have received of the lord, that which I also delivered to you, that the lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed took bread; and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, take, eat, this is my body, which is broken for you, this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, this cup is the new testament in my blood; this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.

HAVING before particularly considered several of the articles, in which we accuse the church of Rome, of corrupting the christian doctrine, with respect to the sacrament of the lord's supper; I now proceed to shew, that they are also guilty of another most notorious corruption, by giving the same worship to the sacrament that they do to God, and obliging all of their communion

munion to perform it. That this is the practice and doctrine of their church, appears by the council of *Trent*. They having declared, that by the words of consecration, the whole substance of the bread and wine is turned into the body and blood of Christ, then add, "It is not therefore to be doubted, but that all faithful christians should give to this sacrament, that highest worship, called *latría*, which is due to the true God." And whoever affirms otherwise, is pronounced accursed. And this worship they give to the host, or wafer, which we call the consecrated bread, not only at the time of receiving it, but whenever it is carried about the streets; all passengers are then admonished by the sound of a bell, to pay their worship and devotions, to the God that passeth by them; and whoever shall condemn this practice, as being idolatrous, are pronounced accursed.

As this kind of worship was never commanded by our saviour, or given by the apostles, so the very nature of christianity plainly proves the contrary. For can it be imagined, that that religion which so strictly forbids all idolatry, should set up a God to be worshipped, which to all who believe their senses, can appear no other than an idol, being a meer piece of bread? And that the church of Christ in the first ages, had no such kind of worship, we have this undeniable argument that the *Pagans* would have upbraided them with it, whenever the christians reproved them for their many idols; which yet we do not find they ever did. The christian fathers in all their writings take much pains to expose the heathen idolatry, and the great folly of giving divine worship to a creature, or what is only the work of mens hands. But with what face could they do this, if they were also guilty of the same practices. For though they might think, that what the *Pagans* worshipped,

were real idols and false Gods, but what they worshipped was Jesus Christ, under the form of bread; yet how would this satisfy the *Pagans*? If a *Pagan* at the elevation of the host, had seen christians fall down and worship it, would not he think he had as great reason to reproach them for adoring a piece of bread, as they had to revile him, for adoring the sun, or moon, or any image? *Minutius Felix*, an early christian writer, thus reasons against the *Pagans*; “ they, says he, melt brass, cast it, set it up, and fasten it; it is yet no God: they polish and adorn it; neither is it yet a God: but see now, they consecrate it, they pray to it; then as soon as men would have it to be a God, it is a God.”

And might not the pagans return the same upon christians, supposing the practice we now speak of, had been then in use. Let me give you the words of an excellent divine of our own. “ Christians sow wheat, they cut, gather, and thresh it; it is no Christ yet: they grind it, they sift it, they bake it; still it is but bread, or a wafer: they set it upon an altar, they lift it up, they cross it several times; it is yet the same it was before: at last, they speak the five words of consecration; and then presently many miracles break forth; and among an hundred wafers, which are like to one another, that which the priest pleaseth to think upon, that is their saviour.” Surely this practice of christians, must be as absurd and ridiculous as that of the pagans; who are called idolaters by the scriptures, and all christian writers; and they who adore the host in the sacrament, with the worship only due to God, are idolaters as much as they.

For is it not idolatry to worship that for God, which is not God? If it be not, then the pagans were no idolaters; if it be, then they who worship

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ship the host with divine worship, are idolaters; for certainly, what they worship is not God, nor our saviour, but only a wafer, or piece of bread. This we are as sure of, as we can be of any thing, that is an object of our senses. If ignorance and mistake in this case will excuse the papists, so it will the pagans; but no more the one than the other. Because, all the marks and reproaches which the scriptures give of an idol, as much belong to the popish God in the sacrament, as to any thing worshipped by the pagans. The mark and reproach of a pagan idol, is, that it was made by men; and is not the God in the mass, as much the work of mens hands, as were any of the pagan idols? A God so quickly made, that it is only for the priest to speak five words with intention, and it is done. Let none be offended then that I say, the papists make their God, or the body and blood of Christ; for it is their own words used by them: and one reason why they deny the orders of priesthood in the protestant church, is, because in our ordinations, we do not pretend to confer a power of making *the body of Christ*.

The penmen of holy scripture do not only sufficiently describe an idol, but also expose it to laughter and contempt, by enumerating the many ill usages it is obnoxious to; and there is no abuse of this kind, which they mention, but what the papists God in the mass is as liable to, as any pagan idol. If the *Egyptians* are reproached by *Isaiah*, for worshipping that which is *cast to the moles, and to the bats*; do not the *Romanists* deserve as much, for worshipping what is never safe from the rats and mice, if they can get at it? If the gods of the *Babylonians* were idols, because forced to be carried upon mens *shoulders*, or, *otherwise they could not help themselves*; and is it not as good an

argument, to prove the host in the mass an idol because it is exposed to the very same inconveniencies? They frequently carry it about to be worshipped, and there is one day in the year set apart to that purpose. In truth, there is no great difference between the pagan idols, and the popish God in the mass; except, that the pagans were never so foolish, as to think that the silver and gold, wood and stone, of which they made their gods, though consecrated by them, lost their substances, and were turned into the true nature and substance of the God they meant to worship. No; they always believed that what was thus consecrated, still retained its nature and substance, and was no more the object of their worship, than as it represented the God it worshipped; and if this idol or material God, was stolen, broken, or defaced, they never thought that the God they adored and worshipped, suffered any of these affronts, but that he was infinitely above all these injuries. This was the pagan notion. But the papists act upon very different principles. For they teach, that the bread of which the priest by consecration makes Jesus Christ, (and so an object of divine worship) is turned into the very substance of what they adore. By consecration, it is no longer bread, but turned into the *very body of Christ, together with his soul and divinity*, united to it; so that if this wafer, or bread, which is their object of worship, should happen to be stolen, or burnt, or trodden under foot, or devoured by vermin; they must own and cannot deny, that their saviour, whom they worship, is the person who suffers all these indignities.

But though all the reproaches thrown upon the pagan idols in scripture, fall heavily upon the christian idol in the mass, yet there is one thing which casts such an indignation on the person whom the

the papists pretend to adore, as never was offered by any pagan to his God. The *Romanists* have no sooner of the bread made a saviour and worshipped him, but they presently eat him; was there ever any such thing heard of in any pagan country? Did ever any man make a God, consecrate and adore him as God, and soon after eat him, and then send him to a place not fit to be named? And yet this is done in the church of *Rome*. *Cicero*, who was a pagan, and knew that religion perfectly well, says, "that among all the religions of his time, there was no man so foolish and sottish, as to pretend to eat his God." The *Egyptians*, who worshipped the vilest creatures, yet never dared to eat their Gods. The *Romanists* are the first who ever put this affront upon their God. The most rude *Barbarian* would never eat and devour, what he sincerely believes to be God; or worship and adore that for supreme God, which he intends the next moment to eat; well, therefore, might the *Arabian* philosopher say, "If there be no catholics, no christians, but those who will adore that which they eat, it is better for us, to be of the religion of the philosophers."

But in answer to this, the papists say, that they do not pretend to worship any thing in the sacrament but Jesus Christ, who as God-man is a true and proper object of the highest worship; and who is there under the form of bread: for after consecration there is no bread left, but it is turned into the substance of Christ's body, and therefore they give divine worship to Christ thus invisibly present. Now admitting, that all which can render the worshipping of the host lawful or excusable, is their believing the bread to be turned into the body of Christ; yet if the doctrine of transubstantiation should prove true, they are not certain, that when they adore the host they are free from idolatry; and if transubstantiation be not true, but the bread

they worship be still bread, then they are as much idolaters as ever the pagans were. I will thus prove these two points.

The doctrine of transubstantiation may be true, and yet the bread and wine may not in every sacrament be turned into the body and blood of Christ, and if they are not, whoever worships them must be guilty of idolatry by worshipping a creature. But when they are so turned, or not, no one can certainly know. For according to the *Romish* doctrine, the bread and wine are never transubstantiated, but when rightly consecrated, and which cannot be done unless "the words of consecration be right spoken; that he who speaks them be a lawful priest; and that the priest when he speaks the words intends to make the body of Christ of the bread." If any one of these be wanting, there is no consecration; and if no consecration, no transubstantiation; and if no transubstantiation, no body of Christ; and if no body of Christ, then what is worshipped is only a piece of bread, and consequently it is an idolatrous worship. Now who can be assured, that the consecration is always performed with all these requisites; considering how difficult it is to know, whether the priest may speak the words right; or that he is a true priest; or what is the real intention of the priest who consecrates the sacraments? These being the conditions to the changing of the bread and wine, which no man living can tell whether the priest hath them or not; it is impossible for any one to know, whether at the sacrament he worshippeth Christ Jesus, or a piece of bread, though the doctrine of transubstantiation should be true; and if not certain of all this, are not such guilty of idolatry?

All this is supposing the truth of transubstantiation; but if that be a meer fiction, if the bread and wine, notwithstanding consecration, still continue

tinue the same, and the body of Christ is still at the right hand of God, in heaven; then if this be true, are not the papists idolaters with a witness? And do they not give divine worship to a meer contemptible creature, and become idolaters for so doing? Nay even a jesuit, (*Coster*) affirms, "That if their church be mistaken in the doctrine of transubstantiation, they do, *ipso facto*, stand guilty of such a piece of idolatry, as was never before known in the world." And we are as certain as we can be of any thing, that transubstantiation cannot possibly be true, since it is against the evidence both of sense and reason. But say they, "tho' we do believe that the body of Christ, is indeed present in the sacrament, instead of the substance of bread, and therefore we give divine worship to it; yet suppose we should be mistaken in this, their good meaning and intention would excuse them from idolatry; for they intend no worship, but to Jesus, who is a proper object of their adoration. If through ignorance they worship a creature, thinking it to be Christ, they are indeed mistaken; but no more idolaters for such mistake, than a man would be thought a traitor to his prince, who thro' ignorance or mistake, should kneel down and pay such respect to a courtier, as was only due to a king." However plausible this may seem, yet it will not free them from idolatry. For it supposeth, that idolatry cannot be committed where a man is mistaken in the object he adores, if his meaning be right and good. But this is not only false, but the direct contrary is true.

There never was any real idolatry, but it was founded upon a mistake. No serious man was ever so foolish to adore that for the supreme God, which he did not believe to be so; and yet if what he worshipped was not God, he was an idolater, notwithstanding his good meaning. I do not think

that the papists do now more stedfastly believe, that the consecrated bread is the true body of Christ, than millions of *Pagans* did formerly believe, that the sun was the supreme, all powerful, eternal God. But yet this their ignorance and mistake in worshipping the sun, did not excuse them from being charged with gross idolatry, by all the penmen of holy scripture; much less can the belief of transubstantiation excuse the papists. Because, though we do not deny but that ignorance and mistake, when innocent, and contracted by our own faults, will excuse in all cases, as well as in that of idolatry; yet as all idolatry proceeds from mistake and misapprehension, so it is certain, that that idolatry will be the least excusable, and have the least allowances made for it, that hath the fewest temptations, and the greatest arguments of sense and reason against it.

And I appeal to all the world, whether the papists who worship a piece of bread, have not much fewer temptations for, and stronger arguments against that worship, and consequently cannot pretend less ignorance and mistake, and are therefore more inexcusable, than the pagans who worshipped the sun. For the pagans had more to urge for the sun's being God, than the papists can possibly have, that a wafer, or piece of bread is God. Besides, they were left wholly to the light of nature, without the aid of God's revealed will; and if prompted by education, and the custom of the world to worship a visible God, what visible being was more likely to be *he* than the sun? But this cannot be said for the papists. For they have the scriptures to direct them to the true God; they have their senses to tell them, that a piece of bread cannot be *he*; they have their reason to assure them, by mathematical demonstration, that transubstantiation is impossible; they have many arguments from scripture to convince

vince them, that the sense they put on our saviour's words, *this is my body*, is not *what* he meant, but the quite contrary. Lastly, they have opportunities enough afforded them, to convince them of their error, by the continued reasoning and arguments of the protestants, who for above an hundred and fifty years have declared and testified against them. Let them not then pretend invincible ignorance, nor say, that their worshipping the bread for Jesus Christ, through a mistake, can be no worse thought of by God, than a loyal subject paying his homage to a privy counsellor instead of the king, can be so interpreted by the king, there being no comparison between them. The man who thus misplaceth his respect is really excusable; but had he as long lived at court, as the papists pretend to have known the scriptures, and to have used their reason, and yet should continue his first compliments, the whole world would think him either a fool, a madman, or a knave. And so much for this point.

I shall now proceed to consider the only text in scripture, besides, that of our saviour, *this is my body*, which seems to favour the doctrine of transubstantiation, which is this. "Except ye eat the flesh of the son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day; for my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed*." From hence the papists conclude, that in the sacrament of the lord's supper, the very true flesh of Christ is eaten, and his blood is drank, even in the strictest literal sense. But the directly contrary is evidently plain, namely, that these words must of necessity be interpreted of a spiritual eating and drinking by faith, as protestants contend for. I do not deny, but

* John 6. 53.

but our saviour might here possibly allude to the sacrament which he afterwards instituted; but then if these words do respect our eating and drinking in the sacrament, yet it is impossible they should be understood in that gross literal sense the papists do; namely, that in the sacrament we eat the very real natural body of Christ, and drink his blood, and not bread and wine as our senses assure us.

But it will be proper first to shew, that these words cannot possibly be interpreted in favour of transubstantiation; and having given an intelligible account of the true meaning of them, I will endeavour to explain, in what sense the church of *England* believes the real presence of Christ in the sacrament. And it ought to be observed, that some of the most learned papists, so far from urging this text as an argument for transubstantiation, that they do acknowledge and even contend, that it doth not at all relate to the sacrament. Cardinal *Cajetan* explains these words as the generality of protestants do. "To eat the flesh of Christ, and to drink his blood, saith he, is faith in the death of Christ; so that the sense is, if ye use not the death of the son of God, as meat and drink, ye have not the life of the spirit in you." And he expressly denies, that they are to be understood of eating and drinking at the sacrament. In this he follows St. *Austin* and other fathers. Besides, it will be hard to interpret these words of eating and drinking Christ's flesh and blood in the popish sense, because Christ here speaks of doing this in such a manner, as was actually necessary to salvation. But this sacrament was not instituted, till at least a year after, and consequently the apostles, or any then present, could not have the least notion of such an institution.

The apostles therefore had then either no life in them, but were in a state of condemnation, or they eat

eat and drank the flesh and blood of Christ, when there was no sacrament in use, and so could not eat and drink it in a literal sense. And if we are strictly to expound these words of eating and drinking in the sacrament, what will become of those who never could thus partake of Christ's body and blood? Such as infants or grown persons, who die before they come to the lord's table? Because all such according to this notion have no life in them, and are in a state of death and condemnation.

But were we to take these words in a literal sense, yet it would do no service to their cause. For their doctrine is, that the elements of bread and wine after consecration, are turned into the very body and blood of Christ. But these words, if taken literally, will rather prove, that Christ's body and blood are turned into bread and wine, than that bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Christ. Our saviour says, *I am the bread of life; I am the living bread that came down from heaven;* and that they *must eat his flesh and drink his blood.* And he gives a reason for this strange command; *For, my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.* So that these words much rather prove, that Christ's flesh is turned into meat, (that is, into that bread he before spoke of, which is common food for mankind, as the manna was in the wilderness, upon which occasion this discourse began) than that the bread is turned into Christ's body. But suppose we interpret the words, *eating Christ's body and drinking his blood*, and also of his being *bread*, both of them in a literal sense: why then we must acknowledge with the papists, that in the sacrament, we eat and drink Christ's very body and blood, nay, Christ himself; but then they must also own with us, that Christ is true *bread* (which ought to be taken literally, if his former words are) and then, though we eat Christ's body in the sacrament, yet we eat

true bread also. But let the papists shew how we can eat *Christ's very body and true bread*, at the same time. For they will not say that we eat Christ's body and bread at the same instant, it being an article of faith with them, that after the bread is made Christ's body, it is no longer bread.

Besides, were we to admit that the bread and wine in the sacrament are turned into the real body and blood of Christ, what a miserable condition would the laity be then in, who must be deprived of the necessary means of obtaining eternal life. For our saviour says expressly, *except ye eat the flesh of the son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.* For though the laity among the papists eat the flesh of Christ in the sacrament, yet they are not suffered to drink his blood; so that they want one half of the qualification necessary to salvation, for Christ has made the blood as necessary as the flesh. He expressly says, if they do not both eat his flesh, and drink his blood, they have no life in them. Having said enough on this head,

I will now endeavour to give such an account of these words, as will avoid all the before-mentioned absurdities, and as what best agrees with all the passages in our saviour's discourse. And it is certain, that whatever gloss the papists make on these words, yet Christ expressly assures us, that they are not to be understood in a literal, but a mystical and spiritual sense. For when many of his disciples understood the words of *eating Christ's flesh and drinking his blood* in a carnal sense, as the papists now do, "they were much offended, and said, this is a hard saying, who can hear it; now when Jesus knew that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, doth this offend you? What, and if ye shall see the son of man ascend where he was before?" As if he had said, "you are offended at my telling you, that you must eat the flesh of the son of man,
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and drink his blood. Though ye take this in a literal sense, yet you will be convinced I have no such meaning, when you see this son of man, with his body and blood, visibly ascend into heaven, from whence he first came. Then surely, you will not think of carnally eating and drinking my very body and blood; for then both my body and blood will be in heaven, and not upon earth." He then adds, "it is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you they are spirit and they are life;" that is, the words that I have spoken concerning eating of my flesh, are to be understood of a spiritual eating and drinking; and by that means only, eternal life is to be obtained. Shall we then believe the papists, who interpret our saviour's words carnally, or he himself, who declares that he speaks them in a spiritual sense?

But what is this spiritual sense of eating and drinking Christ's flesh and blood? I answer, it means no more, than *to come to him, or to believe in him*; for so these phrases are expounded in this very chapter. "This is the will of him that sent me, that every one that believeth on the son may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day. No man can come unto me, except my father draw him, and I will raise him up at the last day. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day." So that the same promise, in the very same words, being made in this discourse, to all *who believe in Christ*, to all *who come to him*, and to all *who eat his flesh and drink his blood*; it is an undeniable argument, that all these several expressions mean one and the same thing. Again,

He tells them confidently, * *He that believeth in me, hath everlasting life; I am that bread of life*; or that

* John 6. 47, 48, 51.

that spiritual food which will bring men to it. *The bread*, saith he, *is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world*; that is, I will lay down my life for the salvation of mankind, and my death shall be life to others; and my flesh thus crucified, shall be meat to all believers, such as shall nourish them to everlasting life. So that, whosoever eats this flesh of mine thus offered, and drinks this blood of mine thus shed, shall have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day? as if he had said, "whoever doth heartily believe in me, and become my disciple, and obeys my commandments, and instead of being scandalized at my death, will adhere to my faith, and continue my disciple and follower; to such, this death of mine will procure eternal life, by means of my holy spirit, which shall raise him up at the last day. But except a man doth this, he hath no life in him, nor will I raise him up at the last day." This seems to be the true and genuine sense of our saviour's words; so that they are not to be taken in a gross carnal sense, for a person to eat the natural flesh of Christ, or drink his blood. But if we so believe in Christ as to be conformable to his death, by dying to sin, and living unto righteousness; this is truly living on Christ's body and blood, and every true believer, who lives according to this belief, doth in every act of religion he performs, eat the flesh of Christ, and drink his blood; for he exerciseth acts of faith and obedience to him, which is the true eating and drinking here mentioned.

But say some, the church of *England* doth expressly believe and profess the real presence of Christ's body and blood to all worthy receivers, and this is attended with as many difficulties as transubstantiation. To this I answer, that we do indeed own, that Christ is really present in the sacrament to all worthy receivers, and we pray God

to grant, that we may eat the flesh of his dear son, and drink his blood; and we also beseech him to grant, that we receiving these his creatures of bread and wine, may be partakers of Christ's most blessed body and blood; in which we agree with the apostle, who tells us, that the bread we break, is the communion of Christ's body; and the cup of blessing which we drink, is the communion of his blood*. But then we are to consider, in what sense these expressions are to be understood. The papists say, that the eating Christ's flesh, or partaking of his body and blood, is to be understood in a strict literal sense. We say, that the literal sense is impossible, because Christ could not give away his body to the apostles, while he was alive; with his own hands, much less give it to them broken and crucified, before he was crucified. And therefore these expressions are to be understood in a spiritual, mystical sense. They say, the substance of bread and wine is changed into that of Christ's body and blood, so that every communicant, good or bad, doth not eat bread, but the very flesh of Christ; our church saith, "that the natural body and blood of Christ, are in heaven and not here; and therefore our giving, eating, taking the body of Christ, is only after an heavenly and spiritual manner, and the means whereby they are received and eaten is faith." The plain meaning of our church is this. In the holy communion, as in the sacrament of baptism, "there is the sign and the thing signified; the outward part or sign of the lord's supper, is the bread and wine; the inward part or the thing signified, is the body and blood of Christ. Now as our bodies are made partakers of the bread and wine, for their strengthening and refreshment; so if we receive them worthily, our souls are made partakers of the body and blood of Christ to their strengthening and

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* 1 Cor. 10. 16.

refreshment†.” But then this body and blood of Christ, are to be understood in such a sense, as a soul can be supposed to feed upon a body or receive nourishment by feeding on it; but Christ’s body can be no otherwise food for the strengthening and refreshing of our souls, than only as the spiritual benefits of that body and blood, or the virtue and effects of Christ’s sacrifice upon the cross, are communicated to it; nor can the soul receive these benefits but by faith. So that in the sense of our church, Christ’s body and blood are only the benefits of his passion, namely, the pardon of sin, the grace of the holy spirit, and a nearer union with Christ; and our eating and drinking of that body and blood, is our being made partakers of those benefits by a true and lively faith.

It is then certain, that our church cannot mean the body of Christ in any other sense than this, because she expressly affirms, that Christ hath but one body which is in heaven and not here; and that the body which we eat is for the nourishment of our souls, which the body of Christ literally could not be. When therefore we talk of the presence of Christ’s body in the sacrament, we mean no more, than that the holy spirit of Christ is present at every such ordinance of God; and that whoever comes prepared with faith and repentance, devotion and charity, that holy spirit will apply to every such communicant, the body and blood, that is, all the benefits and effects of Christ’s sacrifice. If then any one asks, whether we own the body and blood of Christ to be truly present in the sacrament; the answer is, if by these words are meant the spiritual presence of Christ for conveying all the benefits of his body crucified, and blood shed for mankind, to all who worthily commemorate his death by the sacrament, then the church of *England* does in this sense own a real presence of Christ’s body and blood.

blood to all pious communicants. But if by Christ's body and blood be meant the substance of that which was crucified, and is now in heaven, then in this sense our church cannot own any real presence, but rather a real *absence*. For Christ hath but one body which is in heaven, and not here; it being against the truth of his natural body to be in more places than one at the same time. I will conclude in the words of archbishop *Cranmer*.

“ When I say, that the body of Christ is present in them that worthily receive the sacrament, lest any man should mistake my words, and think I mean, that although Christ be not corporally in the outward visible signs, yet he is corporally in the persons that duly receive them; this is to advertise the reader, that I mean no such thing. But my meaning is, that the force, the grace, the virtue, and benefits of Christ's body that was crucified for us, and his blood that was shed for us, be really and effectually present with all them that duly receive the sacrament. But all this I understand of the spiritual presence, of the which he saith, *I will be with you to the end of the world. And wheresoever two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them. And he that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him**. Nor no more truly is Christ corporally or really present in the due administration of the lord's supper, than he is in that of baptism, that is to say, in both spiritually, by grace. And wheresoever in the scripture it is said, that Christ, God, or the Holy Ghost, is in any man; the same is to be understood spiritually by grace†.” These are the words of that excellent martyr, and there needs no more to be added.

* Mat. 18. 20. John 6. 56. † Preface to *Gardner*.

DISCOURSE XV. Abp. *Sbarpe*.

Of private masses, or the priests receiving alone; of denying the cup to the laity; and of the mass being a propitiatory sacrifice.

I Cor. 11. 23, 24, 25.

For I have received of the lord, that which I also delivered to you, that the lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, take, eat, this is my body, which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of me.

After the same manner also, he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, this cup is the new testament in my blood; this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.

AT the time of writing this epistle, many abuses were crept into the church of *Corinth*, with respect to the holy communion; many disorders they were guilty of, when met together to receive it; all which the apostle here complains of, and endeavours to reform. The method he takes for this purpose, is to represent the primitive institution of that sacrament; the ends for which our lord appointed it; and the manner in which his disciples received it. This is the full design of these words; and what I would infer from them is, that in all the ordinances and appointments of christianity, (such as the sacraments are) the rule and measure by which all succeeding churches are

are to direct their practice, is the original institution of our lord, and the usage of the apostles; and all abuses or corruptions are to be reformed, by that primitive pattern: Not that every thing we find in scripture practised by our saviour, or his apostles, in christian worship, doth precisely oblige all churches. For instance; there are many circumstances in receiving the sacrament, which do not concern the nature of the action, but are indifferent to it, and therefore need not be observed; as the time, place, posture, number of persons, and the like. In these things we are to be determined, not by our saviour's or the apostles practice, but by the laws of the church, or the custom of our country. Our saviour gave the sacrament after a meal in the evening; but this does not make it unlawful to receive it in the morning. He gave it in an upper room; and yet we may safely partake of it in churches. His giving it to his disciples sitting or leaning, is no reason against our taking it kneeling, no more than our administering it to a full congregation, when he did it only to twelve persons.

We must therefore distinguish between the essentials, and the external accidents of religious worship; between what concerns the nature of the action, and what is meerly circumstantial. If we do this, then the rule by which every church is to govern herself, as to the doctrine of the sacrament, is the original institution of our lord, and his apostles, as delivered in the scriptures. And when any church departs from this rule, it stands in need of a reformation. And this respects matters of faith, as well as of worship. Whatever is delivered in scriptures as an article of faith is firmly to be believed by all christians; and whatever is not there expressed, no church can make it an article of faith, or oblige her subjects to believe it.

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For if upon examination, we find any article of religion proposed to us by any church, to be repugnant to scripture, however infallible such church may pretend to be, it is a corruption of christianity, and ought to be rejected by all good christians; so that both in matters of faith, and of christian worship, the scripture is our rule. What the apostles received of our saviour and delivered to us, is the standard of our belief and practice. What they taught we must embrace; what they ordered in the worship of God, we must follow; and reject whatever is inconsistent thereto, as an innovation, an abuse, and corruption of Christ's religion.

My present design is faithfully to represent, what the *Romish* church teacheth and practiseth concerning this sacrament; and to examine those doctrines and practices, by the primitive institution and practice of our lord and his apostles; that all may judge, how far they have depraved and departed from that sacred ordinance of Christ; and so disguised and transformed it, that was a primitive christian of the apostles days to be present now at their mass service, he would not know it to be the sacred supper instituted by our lord, but rather take it for some paganish and idolatrous worship. And when we observe how far she hath severed from the scripture rule, and the practice of the primitive church, not only in a few circumstances, but in what concerns the very essence and nature of the sacrament; we should become the more confirmed in the protestant religion, and be convinced what reasons we have not to join in communion with the church of *Rome*.

The sacrament is not a matter of speculation, but the most solemn part of the christian worship; and we are all greatly concerned, to have just sentiments about it, that we may worship God in a
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right way; and therefore if it appears, that the church of *Rome* is corrupt herein; that they do not perform this worship, as instituted by Christ, and practised by his apostles, but act contrary thereto, I hope none of us will leave our own church to go to theirs, let the arguments they use be ever so plausible.

It is the policy of the *Romish* priests, in order to pervert protestants, to keep themselves within general terms, and to give high commendations of the catholic church. They will make long harangues of *St. Peter's* infallibility, and the pope's being his successor; that salvation is only to be had in their church; and which they can prove by twenty marks of the true church, antiquity, succession, perpetual visibility, and the rest; whereas our church, they say, is but of yesterday's standing, and not heard of before *Luther*. While they amuse people with these general plausible encomiums of their church, and invectives against ours, which in truth is nothing but craft and sophistry, it is no wonder if they sometimes ensnare unwary persons; for only a few are competent judges of history and antiquity, so as to be able to confute them. But let us once bring them from these generals to particulars, and the case will be otherwise. For instance; let us in particular consider their daily service prescribed by the mass-book. The chief part of this service, is the celebration of the lord's supper; and if it plainly appears, that there are many great errors in this service—many things believed and practised, utterly inconsistent with the doctrine and practice of Christ and his apostles; I say, if a protestant can but prove this, (as he easily may, if he has but a competent knowledge of their and our religion) as he will not then be deceived by their general arguments, so will he be afraid to communicate in such an unchristian wor-

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ship; and be able effectually to confute all their pretences to antiquity, and the rest of the specious characters they would stamp on themselves. For how can that church be an infallible church, which teacheth so many errors, in the chiefeft part of the christian worship, the sacrament of the lord's supper? or, how can that be an apostolical church, whose practices herein are so contrary to the apostles? Having said enough to shew the usefulness of this argument, I will now proceed to examine the *Romish* doctrine and practices about the lord's supper, by the apostles rule here laid down; that is, the institution of Christ, and the practice of the apostles.

I shall not here insist on their making seven sacraments, all equally necessary to salvation, and all conferring grace; whereas, by what we can learn from scripture, Christ never instituted more than *two*, baptism and the lord's supper; nor will I insist on their having the whole office of the sacrament in *latin*, a language only understood by the learned, by which the people cannot be edified, and is a practice severely reprov'd by St. Paul; nor yet insist on the multitude of masses, or sacraments to be celebrated on the same day and time, at the request of any one who will purchase them, at no greater price than twelve pence a mass. And what a vile prostitution of the blessed sacrament is this? These corruptions and abuses in the church of *Rome*, though very great, I pass over, because they will appear small and inconsiderable, when compared with those I shall now mention.—And we charge the church of *Rome* with five notorious errors and abuses, in the matter of the sacrament, which if we prove them guilty of, no man, who reads the scriptures, can believe their sacrament to be the same as our saviour instituted.

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The first is, that though in every mass said in that church, (of which there are daily many thousands) they have a communion, yet there is no one communicates but the priest; so that here is every day a communion without a communion. Secondly, that when they allow the people to communicate with the priest, yet they will not allow any but the priest to receive the cup; so that here is but half of the communion that Christ appointed. Thirdly, they have transformed the sacrament into a sacrifice; for in every sacrament they pretend to offer up our saviour's body and blood, as a sacrifice to God. Fourthly, in this sacrament, according to our saviour's institution, there is both a material, and a spiritual part; the sign and the thing signified; the bread and wine to be received as symbols of Christ's body and blood: But they have quite taken away the former, not allowing us to believe that the bread and wine, which we think we receive, and eat and drink, is either sign, or symbol, or bread and wine, but the very natural body and blood of Christ. Fifthly, this very bread which we eat, and the wine the priest drinks, they require us to worship and adore as almighty God, under pain of damnation. These are the points, in which the church of *Rome* has grossly corrupted the christian doctrine and practice of the sacrament. I shall endeavour to make this charge good, by particularly considering them.

The first abuse we charge them with, is their private masses. I before observed, that in every mass there is a communion. But in that service which is daily performed, none but the priest communicates; he consecrates the sacrament, offers it up to God, and then receives it in both kinds. But if there be ever so great a number of people or other priests, none partake with him, in tasting either bread or wine; all that they do, is to be-

hold and worship. Who ever hath been at mass, knows this to be true; nay, one of the canons of the council of *Trent* is this, "whosoever affirms, that the masses in which the priests only doth sacramentally communicate, are unlawful, and therefore to be abolished, let him be accursed." And let any one judge, whether this be not a great abuse, and directly contrary to the ends and design of the sacrament, instituted by Christ. The scripture and all christian writers inform us, that the sacrament was intended for a communion; and yet we see here a sacrament administered, but no communion. For the priest communicates with none but himself; like a man who communicates a secret or mystery to himself. Our saviour *blest the bread, brake it, and gave it to his disciples. He took the cup, and bid them all drink of it; and this the apostles also practised.* One end of its institution, according to *St. Paul*, was the joining all christians together in one common body or society. *We being many are one bread and one body, because we are all partakers of that one bread**, viz. the sacramental bread. But if this union of christians be signified by their all partaking of the same sacramental bread; then surely that service, in which none partake of the bread but the priest, cannot be a true sacrament, because the union or society of christians, one with another, is not there signified and represented.

And as the scriptures do not favour such kind of private masses, so neither do the fathers, nor the practice or usage of any one christian church for many ages after Christ. The fathers never speak of the sacrament, but as a communion; and they severely reprove those who do not receive, when they have opportunity; nor can an instance be given for six hundred years, I might say, double
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* 1 Cor. 10. 17.

that time, wherein the priest only received the sacrament, and none of the congregation with him. But we need no further arguments against this practice of the church of *Rome*, than from the very name of the mass. For what we call mass, or *missa* in *latin*, is the communion office; so called, because when that came to be said, those who did not partake of the sacrament were dismissed the congregation, by an officer appointed for that purpose. This is the notion of the *old mass*, when private masses, wherein the priest alone communicated, was never thought of.

The second abuse of the church of *Rome* in the sacrament is their denying the cup to the people. For none but the priest hath the benefit of the cup. The council of *Trent* ordains, "that if any one shall say, that all the faithful people of Christ are bound, by virtue of any commandment of God, or as of necessity to salvation, to receive the sacrament of the eucharist in both kinds; or shall say, that there were not just causes and reasons moving the church to administer the sacrament to the laity only under one kind, that of bread; or that the church hath erred herein; let him be accursed." This is the law and practice of the church; and let any one who hath read the new testament judge between us. I will appeal to every man, whether according to the words of institution *, our saviour did not make the cup as essentially necessary to the sacrament of the Lord's supper as the bread? If any thing, he lays more stress upon drinking the cup, than upon eating the bread. For of that he only says, *take, eat*; but of the cup he saith, *drink ye all of it*.

But say the *Romanists*, "It is no wonder our saviour administered the sacrament in both kinds to his disciples, because they were all priests. The

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* Matt. 26. Mark 14. Luke 22.

apostles who then communicated were clergymen; and we cannot from hence conclude, that the laity have any right to the same privilege." They grant indeed, that the apostles were laymen, and represented the whole body of christians when they received the bread; but when our saviour said, *do this in remembrance of me*, by these words he ordained them priests, and which were spoken before he gave them the cup; so that they did not receive the wine as laymen, but as clergymen. However subtle this may be, yet the council of Trent declares, "that whoever shall say, that Christ when he said, *do this in remembrance of me*, did not by these words ordain his apostles to be priests, let him be accursed." But notwithstanding this curse, they can never prove the apostles were any more priests or in holy orders, when they drunk the wine, than when they eat the bread. For they were perfect laymen, and received no orders to the priesthood, till after our Saviour's resurrection. For when he breathed upon them, and said, *receive ye the Holy Ghost, whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained*: Then they were entered into holy orders, and not before.

It is sufficiently clear, from St. Paul, that all faithful people received it in both kinds, "as oft (says he) as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew forth the Lord's death till he come. For the cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break is it not the body of Christ?" And if this be the use and end of these elements of bread and wine, we may safely conclude, that the one of them is as essential as the other, and both necessary. For is not the communion of Christ's blood as necessary to our salvation, as that of his body?

body? And the communion of the body, as that of the blood? It then plainly follows, that what represents his blood, is as necessary to be taken, as that which represents his body. But they pretend, that the whole perfect Christ, as he lived in the flesh, is contained in the bread alone; so that by receiving the bread, they receive both the body and blood of Christ; and whoever denies this, is by the council of *Trent* pronounced accursed. But if this be true, why did Christ institute the cup, and call it the new testament in his blood? Again,

If partaking of the bread be the communion of the body and blood of Christ, why did St. *Paul* make a distinction between the bread and the cup, calling one the *communion of the body of Christ*, and the other, *the communion of his blood*? But if the body and blood be received in the bread, what does the minister receive, when he takes the cup, for he receives in both kinds? Is it to him the communion of the blood of Christ, or not? If it be not, why doth he receive it? If it be, why are the people denied it? Surely, they have as much right to have communion in Christ's blood as the priests. The truth is, their practice of denying the cup to the laity is so unchristian, so unreasonable, so directly contrary to the institution of our saviour, and the doctrine and practice of his apostles, that one would wonder how it should ever obtain in a christian church. For they cannot produce one testimony out of any author, for a thousand years after Christ, that the sacrament was ever administered to the people in one kind. It was first established by the council of *Constance* about two hundred and sixty years ago; the same council, which ordered the famous *John Hus*, the forerunner of *Luther*, to be burnt for an heretic; and in the council of *Trent*, it was greatly debated, whether the cup should be restored to the

people or no. But against the strongest reasons in the world, the pope's faction carried it, for continuing the sacrilegious denial of the cup. The greatest reasons for this heat and zeal against so plain an institution of Christ's, that I could ever find, are these following.

First, They said those who desired the cup were disaffected persons, and not true catholics; and who, so far from being satisfied with this, would be for having their prayers in a known language, and such other things as their church could not allow. *Secondly*, They said, that the clergy were already in great contempt, and if the people enjoyed the same privilege in the sacraments with them, it would bring them more in contempt, and render the priest and people equal. *Thirdly*, They said the church of *Rome* cannot err; and that as the council of *Constance* had taken away the cup from the people, if they should grant it them again, it would afford an argument to the heretics, that the church had before been mistaken, which was an intolerable thing. These are really the chief reasons they urge for continuing this practice of half communion; so that for fear the laity should be thought of equal dignity with the clergy; for fear that what their church had acted contrary to Christ's institution should be amended, whereby that church would suffer, as to her credit and reputation of infallibility; for these reasons the holy synod of *Trent*, notwithstanding Christ's institution, the apostles practice, and the usage for so many ages, did order, "that none, in a public sacrament, shall communicate in both the elements of bread and wine, but only the priest that consecrates." I proceed,

Thirdly, To shew that they have made a sacrifice of the sacrament; in considering this point, it may be necessary to observe, how far we own the

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the sacrament to be a sacrifice ; then to give an account in what sense the church of *Rome* holds the sacrament to be a sacrifice ; and lastly, to shew how contrary this doctrine of theirs is to the institution of Christ, to the tenor of scripture, and the reason of the thing.

We do admit that the whole communion office, as performed by the church of *England*, may be called a sacrifice ; and the ancient fathers by way of eminency, did call this the christian service ; and the reason for so doing seems to be, 1st, Because we then bring our offerings to God for the use of the poor ; whereby we acknowledge him to be the giver of all the good things we enjoy, and also shew our charity to our indigent brethren, with which kind of sacrifice, *God*, says *St. Paul*, is well pleased. These gifts our church calls offerings and oblations, which in the first prayer of this office, we beg of God to accept ; and these oblations are one great part of that unbloody sacrifice, so often mentioned by the fathers. 2. But what our church calls the offertory, or oblation of our alms, is not the only sense ; wherein we acknowledge the holy communion to be a sacrifice ; for besides these, we do then also solemnly offer up our prayers for ourselves, and our intercessions for the whole church ; also our praises and thanksgivings, ourselves, our souls and bodies, as a sacrifice to God ; and these are a chief part of the christian sacrifice. Lastly, we offer up the before-mentioned oblations or sacrifices, with a particular regard to that one sacrifice of Christ, which he offered upon the cross, here lively represented in the symbols of bread and wine ; which sacrifice we now commemorate before God, we plead the merits and virtue of it before him, and by virtue of which we have the confidence to offer these sacrifices, in hopes they will be accepted. In this sense we offer up even

Christ to his father, we commemorate what he hath suffered, we represent to him the inestimable merits of his passion, and desire God, for the sake of that, to hear our prayers, and accept our oblations. In this sense every protestant offers Christ to his father; as St. *Chrysostome* says, "we do not make another sacrifice every day, but always the same, or rather a remembrance of that sacrifice." And St. *Eusebius*, "we sacrifice a remembrance of the great sacrifice." In these things consist the christian sacrifice as held by the primitive fathers, and are what our church observes at this day; as will appear to all who peruse our communion service: and would the church of *Rome* be content with this, none would oppose them. We offer up our alms, our prayers and praises, by way of remembrance of Christ's sacrifice. This was the christian sacrifice of the ancients, and is ours. But the *Romanists* have invented a new sacrifice, never instituted by Christ, or his apostles, and abhorred by the primitive christians, and which we ought never to join in.

For it is the established doctrine of the church of *Rome*, that in the sacrament of the communion are contained truly, really, and substantially, not only the true body and blood, but the soul and deity of our lord Jesus Christ, that is, the whole Christ; and whoever denies this, he is by the council of *Trent*, pronounced accursed. The priest by saying five words, makes the bread and wine the very true Christ, who is by him offered up in sacrifice to God, and which is a propitiation for the sins of the whole world, an expiatory sacrifice, both for the dead and living. One would scarce believe the church of *Rome* should teach such doctrines as articles of faith, and require the belief of them, under pain of damnation. But let us hear the council of *Trent*, "whoever shall say, that

that in the mass there is not offered up unto God a true and proper sacrifice, let him be accursed; or shall say, that the sacrifice of the mass, is only a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, or only a commemoration of the sacrifice performed on the cross, and that it is not propitiatory, and ought not to be offered for the living and the dead,—whoever affirms any of these, let him be accursed.” This is the *Romish* doctrine concerning the sacrifice of the mass. But how groundless, false and absurd, nay, impious it is, I shall proceed to prove.

For it must be observed, that there is no foundation for any such sacrifice, either in the institution of our lord’s supper, or in any other part of scripture. For in the institution, both his words and actions are immediately directed to his disciples; and such addresses to men are surely no proof of a sacrifice to God. Besides, our saviour did then really offer up himself, body, blood and life, a true and proper sacrifice to God; or he did not. If he did not, shall we dare to offer him up in our sacraments? If as the papists say he did, to what purpose did he afterwards offer himself upon the cross? As for other writers of the new testament, they run in the same strain with our lord, *of taking, eating, and communicating in Christ’s body and blood, and shewing forth his death*; but they say not one word of our sacrificing Christ to God. And St. Paul’s discourse to the *Corinthians*, about eating things offered in sacrifice to idols, is a full confutation of the *Romish* sacrifice. Nay, the scripture flatly says, that Christ was never to be offered up but once. The apostle observing the difference between the law and the gospel, that the “sacrifices of the law being imperfect, and not able to put away sin, were every year to be repeated. But Christ, by once offering up himself,

hath for ever perfected all those that are sanctified *. There is no need he should offer himself often, — for then Christ must have often suffered since the foundation of the world. But Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." According to *St. Paul*, Christ was never to be offered but once; and yet the popish priests offer him many thousand times in a day.

All that they have to say for thus contradicting the scripture, is, that Christ was never offered more than once, under his own form and figure, which was upon the cross when he shed his blood; but that for all this, he may be, and is daily offered upon their altars, under the form and figure of bread. But what shuffling is this, nay, what impiety are they guilty of, in pretending to pen up the intire body and blood of Christ in a wafer; and exposing it to be devoured by rats and mice? And what equivocations do they impute to the apostle, who says, *Christ was never to be offered but once*? But say they he means, not to be offered but once in the same form and figure; when the apostle allows he is offered every day in another form and figure. As to what they say, that Christ's oblation upon the cross was a bloody sacrifice, and of such the apostle speaks, but what they offer in the mass, is a sacrifice without blood; this is another shuffle. For how can they say, that the sacrifice of Christ, which they offer to God in the mass, is a sacrifice without blood; when it is the avowed doctrine of their church, that in every crumb of bread after consecration, there is not only the whole body of Christ, but also all his blood; and whoever denies it, is, by the council of *Trent*, pronounced accursed. Or, if their sacrifice be bloodless, with what confidence can they say, it is a propitiatory sacrifice, for the sins both of

* Heb. 9. 25, 26, 28.

of the dead and living, when St. Paul expressly says, that *without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins* *.

And as this sacrifice of the mass is without scripture, and against it, so is it highly injurious to our lord Jesus, and to that sacrifice he once offered upon the cross to his father; for it vastly depreciates the value of it, by taking away the worth and dignity of that everlasting sacrifice, which it pretends to repeat. For if that first and eternal sacrifice, which Christ once offered upon the cross, hath all that sufficiency and efficacy that can be procured by a sacrifice, nothing is left to be done by the second; and it is idle to say, the priest offers a daily sacrifice propitiatory for the living and the dead, when all the propitiation was made by the first sacrifice. If therefore Christ's first sacrifice did this, what need is there for another? If the debt be once paid, to have it exacted again would be unjust. But the mystery of this sacrifice is, that it hath brought as much money into St. Peter's treasury, as any one trick they ever made use of. For this sacrifice the clergy of Rome have solely in their own hands, either to apply it to the benefit of particular persons or not; because its being applied depends alone on their intentions. "The mass, (saith Aquinas) is beneficial to them to whom the priest hath an intention to apply it." Hence it appears, how necessary it is, to make good applications to the priest, to obtain his intentions, in order to apply the benefit of the sacrifice that is offered to any one that pleases him. But,

Lastly, the sacrifice of Christ, as pretended daily to be offered up in the mass service, is not only injurious to Christ's one sacrifice, but also barbarous and inhuman; because the priest pretends to

* Heb. 9. 22.

to offer up our saviour to God his father, as really as he offered up himself upon the cross; and also to sacrifice him, as an heathen priest sacrificeth a bull or a sheep. Nay, he pretends by the five words of consecration, to bring down Christ's body, soul and deity, from the right hand of God in heaven; and to coop them up in the compass of a wafer and a little wine. To complete this sacrifice, the priest must eat him, or rather swallow him down, for fear some crumbs should remain behind. This done, both priest and people must move God to bless them by virtue of this sacrament; and then they adore what they have thus sacrificed. This is a plain and true account of the sacrifice of the mass; and what has been urged, will, I hope, have force enough, to convince any unprejudiced person, that it is not a service instituted by Christ; but is a great corruption, a vile abuse and deprivation of christianity; which was the point I undertook to prove.

DIS-

DISCOURSE XVI. *Rogers.*

The claim of meriting by our works,
considered.

Luke 17. 10.

So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, we are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.

IT is, I confess, a very mortifying employment to so vain a creature as man, proud of reason and liberty, to reflect on his own insufficiency to happiness. The first irregular passion that appeared in our nature, was a desire of being like God, independent on any foreign support; and though the miseries that attended this vain ambition of our forefather, soon convinced him of his error, yet it was with great reluctancy his pride could be brought wholly to recede from its pretensions. Our saviour is particularly solicitous to apply remedies to bring every proud and arrogant thought in subjection, and to reduce the soul to a true spiritual humility; and therefore in his first instructions to his disciples, he recommends poverty of spirit, as a qualification without which none could be admitted into the society of his kingdom. *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God.* And lest the honour of this new relation to God, and the perfection of those services to which the gospel directs us, should become a fresh motive to human vanity, he in the text assures us, that though we observe every precept of our religion, and do
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all that is commanded us, yet even this can supply us with no just pretence to merit; we must still confess ourselves unprofitable servants, and that we have done no more than what we were bound to perform. I shall therefore endeavour to shew, that supposing we could strictly discharge all the duties of religion, yet still we have no claim to merit; because the utmost we can do is no more than our bounden duty; and all our service is unprofitable to God, he being no way advantaged by it, and which therefore he is under no obligation to requite.

That God has a full indisputable right to our obedience, and may prescribe to us such actions or services, as do not exceed our capacities to perform, is a conclusion implied in the very terms of the relation between God and his creatures. And had he proposed laws to us, without any encouragement of reward, yet this subjection would have obliged us to obedience. The unmerited favour of our creation, is a debt under which we are born, and which our most exact services can never discharge. And if to this original debt, we add the continual instances of support and protection we receive from his providence, the account still rises higher, and so immensely increases, that the vainest presumption of man can never hope to repay it. And if we farther consider the great spiritual mercies which God hath bestowed on us, in and by the gospel; his amazing condescension in submitting the son of his bosom to the shame and agonies of the cross, that he might redeem us, lost and undone by sin, and restore us to the happiness we had forfeited; what services of man can be able to return such vast obligation? Can the purest saint on earth reflect on that hopeless state of misery to which he was fallen, and those wonders of divine love by which he was rescued from it, and presume to say, I have paid my redeemer all that I owe him? Can he

he imagine his most punctual observance of those laws God has enjoined, is more than he is bound to by previous obligations? Or, can he seriously think, that he merits any thing by complying with terms so gracious and merciful, when he is thereby promoting his own interest? Alas! all we do, or can suffer in obedience to the will of God, can bear no proportion to what Christ has done and suffered for us. And if our best services cannot discount his past favour, much less can we plead them in demand of his future. And therefore whatever farther encouragement he is pleased to annex to our obedience, must be acknowledged as a pure act of grace and bounty, and received by us with the humility of supplicants, and not insolently challenged as a claim.

But though we cannot assume any merit to ourselves, for obeying those laws God has prescribed to us, yet there are some who pretend they can do more than he has commanded, and by this superabundant service, lay obligations on God, and acquire a right to be rewarded for it.—But that no man ever did or can do more than he is bound to by the gospel is evident, because he is there strictly obliged to do all the good in his power. The ambition indeed, of meriting something of God, has too often induced men to set a religious value on actions, which he has no where enjoined. But then what grounds have such to believe, that these performances are acceptable to him? The standard of good and evil to us, is the will of God, and the only assurance we have, that what we do is pleasing to him, is, because he has commanded it. *If thou wilt enter into life, says our Lord, keep the commandments.* But if men will be wise above what is written, and fondly imagine they can oblige God by observances which he has not directed: all such sow the wind, and they will reap the whirlwind,
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and must expect to be sent away with that mortifying reproof, *who has required this at your hands?* But though the utmost we do, and the most perfect obedience we can pay, be no more than what we are strictly bound to, both by our natural subjection to his authority, and the gratitude we owe to his manifold mercies; yet if God did receive any advantage by our poor services, we might then have some pretence to insist on a return, and expect some reward from divine justice; but this plea must also be entirely discarded, for our Lord has assured us, "That after we have done all, we are unprofitable. Can a man be profitable unto God? Or is it any gain to him, that thou makest thy way perfect? If thou be righteous, what givest thou unto him, or what receiveth he at thy hands? Thy wickedness may hurt a man as thou art, and thy righteousness may profit the son of man." Thus did *Eliphaz* and *Elibu* expostulate with *Job*. For allowing all that he had pleaded in vindication of himself, yet even the strictest innocence could lay no obligation on God to make a return from the pure merit of the service.

God is a being infinitely happy in the enjoyment of his own perfections, and needs no assistance from his creatures to complete his felicity. Though our observance of his commands, is by his great mercy an advantage to us, yet this is no addition to his happiness, which is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever, and can receive no improvement from the adoration and service of men or angels; and consequently our most dutiful obedience to his laws, cannot lay any obligation of debt on our creator, which his justice or gratitude is bound to discharge. But though our Lord in this place recommends a modest and humble opinion of our services, only from these two arguments, that they are our bounden duty, and derive no advantage on God, which was

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all the application the preceding parable led him to ; yet since both he and his apostles have inculcated the same doctrine from this farther consideration, that neither the performance nor merit are strictly our own, I shall endeavour from hence to enforce the former argument.

The pride of man, indeed, so long as he assumes the performance wholly to himself, will be solicitous to explain the notion of merit, in a sense consistent with his pretensions ; but if it be proved, that every performance is no otherwise his, than as he concurs with a superior agent, without whose assistance he could do nothing, it is in vain for him to assume the merit to himself. Now it is one of the first principles of christianity, that God is the author of every good and perfect work in us. Our saviour said, even to his chosen disciples, without me ye can do nothing. And “ no man can come to me, except the father draw him.” We receive ability to will and to do what is right from his grace alone ; for of ourselves we are not able to think one good thought. It is too just a character of our fallen and depraved nature, that the thoughts of man’s heart are continually evil. The weakness of all our faculties, and the strong aversion of our wills to perform our duty, are confessed and lamented by the greatest examples of piety. St. Paul complains of the “ law in his members, warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him in captivity to sin.” He acknowledges every good and virtuous action to be wholly owing to the supernatural assistance of divine grace ; and that the glory of them was not his, but Christ working in him ; whose holy spirit it is that kindles devotion in our breast, infuses into us good desires, and enables us to execute our pious resolutions. Thus the same apostle argues ; “ what have we, that we did not receive ? Now if we did receive it, why do

do we glory as though we had not received it?" This single reflection should be sufficient to subdue every high and insolent conceit of our own righteousness; that in our best performances to God, we give him but of his own; and that even our inclination and ability to serve him, we receive from him. But supposing that the performance might be called our own, as in a subordinate sense co-operating with God's grace it may be; yet this could be no just motive to our presumption, because the merit of it is not ours, but Christ's. The covenant by which God obliged himself to reward our obedience, was broke and forfeited by our first parents; and by the terms of the second covenant in which we now stand engaged, it is only through Christ that God is pleased to accept of any service at our hands; it is his intercessions and the price and ransom he has paid to divine justice, that has prevailed on him to indulge us with a second trial of our obedience. Hence alone it is, that our actions can receive any value in his sight; and therefore *not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be the praise.* To our redeemer only belongs the merit and the glory of our services, and to us nothing but the gratitude and humility of pardoned rebels. So far from being able to entitle ourselves to new favours, that we could not atone for our past apostacy. It is the blood of Christ that reconciles the deity to our alms and prayers, his righteousness that inclines God to regard our devotions, and through his mediation only, by which they are intitled to a reward.

Hitherto we have considered human actions supposing them agreeable to the divine laws, and even then we can discover nothing of merit in them; and if when we have done all that is commanded us, we have no claim upon the justice of God, and can acquire no other title to his favour but what the di-
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vine compassion and the mediation of Christ give us; how must it mortify all our vain presumptions, to consider human obedience as it is in fact and reality, full of weakness and imperfection? Let any one of the most exact piety, search and examine his own heart, and will he not find his best observances alloyed with frailty and corruption; the most regular and innocent day stained with some transgression, some evil done which he might have avoided, or some good omitted which he might have performed? On such a recollection, some guilt or other will occur to the best of us, to shew that we are debtors to the justice of God, and liable to the penalties of his laws. So that even supposing something of merit might properly be ascribed to any particular act of virtue, yet this could be no foundation for a claim of reward, because the demerit of our offences do abundantly exceed it. For there is a real demerit in every sin, the wages of which is death, and the guilt of it so extensive, that whoever offends in one point, is pronounced guilty of the whole law; and since the best of men are conscious of their own numerous offences, shall a confessed criminal insist on merit? Shall man, born in sin, and laden with actual transgressions, challenge the justice of his creator to an account, and demand rewards from that power, by whose mercy and forgiveness alone he must escape damnation?

The doctrine of merit, says a learned divine *, “ is one of the worst corruptions that ever crept into the christian world. “ Can a man be profitable to God? When ye have done all, say ye are unprofitable servants. Our righteousness is as filthy rags. Behold he chargeth his angels with folly, and the heavens are not clean in his sight. For by grace are ye saved, not by works, lest any man should boast. All have sinned and come short of the

* Dr. Trapp.

the glory of God." Who can read these, and many the like texts of scripture, and not stand amazed at the audacious assurance of those men who dare talk of merit, supererogation, and such a superfluity of good works, that a man may have enough for himself and his neighbour too? Not to insist upon the strange absurdity of making over, and transferring good works and merit from one to another, supposing such superfluity were possible."

Another eminent divine thus writes † : " The best of men are so far from being able strictly speaking to merit any thing for themselves and others, which is the *Romish* doctrine of merit ; that on the contrary even the patriarch *Jacob* declared himself not *worthy of the least of God's mercies*. And tho' St. *Paul* was not conscious of any thing against himself, yet was he *not thereby justified*. And of all christians in general, he says, that " not by works of righteousness which we have done, but by his mercy he saved us ; not according to our works, but according to his grace given us in Jesus Christ. That our salvation is the gift of God. That by the deeds of the law, no flesh shall be justified in his sight. That our sufficiency is of God, who worketh in us both to will and to do of his own good pleasure. And that we are made perfect in every good work to do his will through Jesus Christ." The meaning of all these passages is, that the offer made to us of the happiness of heaven, is the free and undeserved gift of God in Christ. And that the ability of performing the conditions necessary to the obtaining even of that free gift, is continually the effect of the divine assistance ; and that therefore the very best of our works have no merit in them. And yet on the other side, they to whom God has promised upon an easy condition, a very great and disproportionate reward, may truly be said, though not by the

• † Dr. Clark.

the merit of the work itself, yet by virtue of the promise when they have performed that condition, to have deserved the reward. But then this does not at all diminish from the reward's being merely a free gift. God has been pleased freely of his mere grace and bounty, without any previous obligation, to promise eternal life to them that obey him. Obedience was our indispensable duty, whether he had made any such promise or not. And when we have obeyed his will to the best of our power, we have still merited nothing at his hands, more than barely the escaping of punishment; having done only what was our duty to do. Nevertheless, God having been graciously pleased to annex to such obedience the promise of eternal life? from that promise there does arise to such as perform the conditions, a right to the reward, but which right has nothing of merit in it, because that very right itself is founded entirely on such a free gift, as God was under no obligation of having bestowed at all."

Let us not then think more highly of our services than we ought to do, but humble ourselves before the throne of grace, with the modesty of creatures and the contrition of sinners; and let us adore the infinite compassion of God in Christ, "who made him to be sin, for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him*." Through and by him only, can our mixed and imperfect services find acceptance before a pure and holy God. Though we in ourselves are less than nothing, and that our righteousness be like filthy rags, yet as we are clothed with Christ's righteousness, washed and cleansed with his blood; God is pleased mercifully to regard our hopes of his favour, and permit us to approach him with the confidence of sons. From hence we may collect the true foundation of our
title

* 2 Cor. 5. 21.

title to happiness, and the proper temper of mind, with which we may reflect on our own performances.

It is evident then, that we cannot rely on the merit of our obedience, because it is imperfect and mixed with sin; but supposing it perfect, it is no more than a debt, which we are bound to pay from previous obligations, and yet are not able to perform it by our own strength, and which, could it be done by us, can confer no advantage on God, and consequently we can have no claim on his justice for a return. "Had there been a law given, says the apostle, which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law*." Could any service have been performed by man, which could have earned eternal happiness of his maker, God would have spared the beloved of his bosom; the mercy of our redemption would have been superfluous, and Christ had died in vain. But since no action of a creature could properly merit any thing of his creator; since by sad experience of the strength of our nature in its greatest purity, it was impossible for us to perform such conditions of his favour, as would become the holiness and majesty of God to prescribe; our happiness therefore could no other way be provided for, than by the mediation of some person, who was qualified to offer unto God an equivalent for our offences, to satisfy his justice, and intercede for the acceptance of such an obedience as our infirmities would permit us to perform. So that the last and only recourse of our hopes is in Christ. 'Tis through faith in him, and by virtue of the promises sealed unto us in his blood, that our imperfections are assured of forgiveness, and our repentance entitled to a reward. Nor is there any other name, or any other merits proposed to man, through whom he may receive

* Gal. 3. 21.

receive pardon and salvation, but only the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The proper temper then with which we are to reflect on our performances, is an humble acknowledgement of our own unworthiness, and a lively gratitude to our holy redeemer, by whose atonement our heavenly father is reconciled to and will accept of our imperfect services, and by whose grace we are enabled to perform them. And though it be great arrogance to say, *I am clean without transgression*, or to insist on the intrinsic merit of our actions; yet we may be conscious to ourselves, that we have obeyed God in several instances of duty, without presumption, and reflect with comfort on the sincerity of our endeavours, without any imputation of vanity; because though our obedience hath no intrinsic value in itself, yet it is rendered acceptable to God, through Christ's merits. And though our failings and defects are without number, yet still we may rejoice in a conscience void of offence; if by the sincerity of our repentance, we have complied with the terms of the gospel, and entitled ourselves to the pardon offered by it. We may then be sensible we have done our duty without arrogance; we may hope favourably of our interest in God's mercy, without presumption, or claim of any merit in ourselves; and what is the peculiar joy and glory of the christian dispensation, we may confess ourselves sinners without despair. But though God will accept of an imperfect obedience, if sincere, yet this can be no good reason for us to give ourselves up to a lazy and unactive dependance on his mercy. Indeed the utmost we can do will be short of our strict duty, but still we are bound to perform all that we are able; and the omission of any service in our power is a sin, which, if not repented of, will exclude us from any share in that compassion which we so readily presume to

rely on, if not to merit at God's hands. When the debt is beyond our ability to discharge, God will for Christ's sake forgive it. But as far as we are able to pay, he expects the utmost farthing. And tho' our best performances cannot have the nature of obligations on God, yet still they are required as conditions of his favour, and as such will be regarded by him; and our happiness in the final determinations of his justice will be allotted in proportion to them. He who hath sowed much, shall reap much, and he who hath sowed little, shall reap little.

Let us then press forward to the high mark of our calling, and with a stedfast faith pursue our salvation in those methods, to which God has directed us; neither diverted by vain presumptions, nor discouraged by any unreasonable despair. And because we can do nothing, as of ourselves, let us implore the divine assistance to support us in all our conflicts, and make us equal to all the difficulties of our obedience. And whenever we have failed of our duty, and sinned against our creator, let us with an humble confidence in his promises, intreat him to accept of our repentance, not weighing our merits, but pardoning our offences, and dealing with us neither according to our prayers or deserts, but according to our wants and his own rich mercies in Christ Jesus, in whom he is always well pleased.

DISCOURSE XVII. Abp. Sharpe.

Of auricular confession, and satisfaction for sin.

Prov. 28. 13.

*He that covereth his sins shall not prosper ; but who-
so confesseth them, and forsaketh them, shall have
mercy.*

THESE words contain a concise but full description of true repentance, such as God will accept. Repentance, however it may appear to be but a single duty, yet in general comprehends all that the gospel requires. For the whole condition of the new covenant is comprized in these two things, " Repentance towards God, and faith towards our lord Jesus Christ *." It must therefore be of infinite consequence, to be rightly instructed in the nature of repentance ; and yet there is scarce any doctrine of religion more obscured, misrepresented, and corrupted, even to the great danger of men's souls, than this of repentance is. Some who would advance the authority of the clergy, and establish their empire over men's consciences, and enrich themselves by the sins of others, making their consciences to pay for it, have found out many devices concerning repentance, directly contrary to the sense and meaning of scripture. By which they perplex the consciences of the more scrupulous, and encourage the vices and excesses of the really wicked.

The wise man assures us, " that whoso confesseth his sins, and forsaketh them, shall find mercy."

M 2

This

* Acts 20. 2.

This plain notion of repentance, and no other is inculcated both in the old and new testament; every where a contrite confession of our sins to God, and forsaking them, are thought sufficient to denominate a sinner to be a true penitent, and to entitle him to the mercies of God; and whoever doth not both these, is not qualified for God's mercies. If a man doth confess but not forsake his sins, he is not a true penitent, because both are necessary; but the doctrines of the church of *Rome* concerning repentance are of a very different nature.

For they teach, that we must not only confess our sins to God, but also to a priest, or they will not be forgiven; and when we thus make our confession, we must discover, not only all our sins we can remember, but also every circumstance of them; nay, according to them, we may confess and forsake our sins too, and yet they shall not be forgiven us, unless we also make satisfaction for them. Indeed they admit, that upon confessing to a priest, and receiving absolution from him, the eternal punishment due to our sins is remitted; but even then we must suffer very terrible punishments in this life or the next, unless we or some one for us, make compleat satisfaction to the divine justice. They further teach, that if we do but devoutly and contritely confess to a priest and receive his absolution, we are presently put into a state of God's favour, so as to go to heaven, though we do not forsake our sins till our dying day. But if we have not made satisfaction, we must be kept long in purgatory. These are the popish corruptions and innovations concerning repentance, that we have just reason to complain of; doctrines not only taught by private men among them, but are either the express definitions of the council of *Trent*, or the undeniable consequences of

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of what they have there decreed, concerning the sacrament of penance. I shall therefore plainly represent to you the doctrine of confession, and how far protestants allow of confession of sins unto men; and will then shew what the doctrine of the church of *Rome* is, and for what reasons it is blameable. — All the sins that can be confessed, are either such whereby God is only offended; or such whereby some persons is injured, as well as God offended; or such whereby scandal is given to the public society of christians where we live, though no one be injured by them: and as to each of these kinds of sins, we will examine what confession to men is due. And;

First, there is no doubt, but that as to all those sins whereby we have offended or injured our neighbours, we are not only bound to confess them to God, but also to make satisfaction to our neighbours for the injury done them; and that both by a penitential confession and acknowledgment of them, and such further reparations as the case requires. This the natural laws of justice and equity demand; and our saviour's precept is, "that if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy ways, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift*." So that when we have offended any person, it is not enough only to ask God forgiveness, but we must also reconcile ourselves to him, by acknowledging our faults, and making all such reparations as the injury requires; or else we are no ways qualified to make our prayers to God for his forgiveness; and did we seriously consider this, we could not possibly offer the least provocation or injury to any one.

M 3

Secondly,

* Mat. 5. 23, 24.

Secondly, as to all those sins which do not hurt any particular person, but are injurious to the public society of christians, and scandalize the religion we profess; these we and all other protestant churches do not only allow, but approve of even a public confession, and as open as were the sins committed. For instance, should any man deny the faith of Christ and turn heretic, or live in the open practice of any sins that are notoriously repugnant to Christ's religion; there is no protestant church but doth highly approve, that a public confession should be made in the face of the church, of all such crimes by every penitent; that so satisfaction may be made to the scandalized society, and the offending party undo as far as he can, the mischief which his bad example hath done. Indeed, this was the ancient practice in the primitive church; and is that confession we so often read of in ecclesiastical writers, urged by them as necessary to repentance, I mean, a public confession of crimes; but not that private whispering of sins into the ear of a confessor, which the church of *Rome* hath introduced. It is true, there is very little of the ancient ecclesiastical discipline to be seen in our days; whether ever it will be restored, God only knows. It is the wish and prayer of all good men, that it may be. Popery first corrupted the discipline of the church; and happy had it been, if when our first reformers reduced the doctrines of faith to the primitive standard, they had done the same as to our discipline. But till that be effected, we must use the best methods we can to bring men to repentance.

Thirdly, all protestants not only require acknowledgement and confession of injuries to the injured person, as necessary to repentance, and admit of public confession of public sins in the face of the church; but also allow and approve of confession of private sins even to men, more especially to those
who

who are ministers. Nay, so far from being against it, they advise and recommend it in sundry cases, as a most excellent instrument of repentance. So that the papists very unjustly calumniate the reformation, by saying the protestants are against private confession. There is no protestant church but gives it all that due esteem and regard which it ought to have, and all their best writers do seriously recommend it. "Let every faithful christian, says *Calvin*, remember, that when he is burdened and afflicted with a sense of his sins that he cannot ease himself without the help of others, it is then his duty, not to neglect that duty which the Lord hath prescribed to him, *viz.* That for the easing of himself, he resort to private confession with his pastor; — but then this private confession ought to be free, not required of all, but only recommended to those who find they have need of it." And he also speaks great things of the benefit of private absolution, in order to the comforting of afflicted consciences. And this is the general sense of the protestants abroad; only the *Lutherans* are more strict in requiring private confession, than the *French* or *Dutch* protestants are. And our own church in the public exhortation, before the communion directs, "that if there be any who cannot by other means quiet his own conscience, but requireth comfort or counsel, then he should come to some discreet and learned minister of God's word, and open his grief; that by the ministry of God's holy word, he may receive the benefit of absolution, to the quieting of his conscience, &c." and this doctrine of the protestants as to confession may be justified, to all the world.

But the popish doctrine of confession is of another nature, and serves to quite different purposes. The *Romish* church makes a sacrament of repentance, of which there are three parts, *contrition*

for sin; *Confession* to a priest; *Satisfaction*; whoever performs these, upon the priest's absolution, his sins are forgiven: but then all these are necessary to the obtaining pardon and reconciliation. By confession they do not mean confession to God, or to our neighbour in case of injuries, or to the church in case of notorious sins; but private confession to a priest, called *auricular confession*, because it is whispered into his ear. This they make necessary to repentance, and without which, sin is not forgiven. The council of *Lateran* orders, "that every man and woman, after they come to years of discretion, should faithfully confess all their sins privately to their own priest, at least once in the year, and endeavour faithfully to perform the penance enjoined them; and after this they should come to the sacrament at least at *Easter*, unless the priest upon some reasonable cause do judge it fit for them to abstain. And whoever doth not perform this, he is to be excommunicated out of the church; and if he die, he is not to be allowed christian burial." But the council of *Trent* goes much farther, for they decree, that "whoever shall affirm, that this private confession to a priest was not instituted by Christ, and is not by divine right necessary to salvation, let him be accursed. And all mortal sins, which a man after diligent examination finds his conscience to be burdened with, even the most secret, though in thought and desire, even all these are to be repeated to the priest in confession; and not only the sins themselves, but also the circumstances of them, that may change the kind of the sin; and whoever shall say that such confession is not necessary, let every such man be accursed." This is the plain avowed doctrine of the church of *Rome* as to confession, which is a great error introduced into the doctrine of repentance,

tance, and of very ill consequences to the souls of men.

For they make a thing to be of Christ's institution, and of necessity to salvation, that hath no foundation either in the old or new testament. Could they produce but one text of the bible, to prove that this auricular sacramental confession of sins to a priest, was recommended by our Lord or his apostles; or that it was practised by any christian, either of the clergy or laity, or so much as mentioned by the holy men of that time, something might be said. But this they cannot do. And therefore to impose this doctrine upon all the christian world, is most intolerable. But there is one text which they so much rely upon, that it ought to be considered, "confess your sins one to another, that ye may be healed; for the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much*." And what have these words to do with private confession to a priest? For the apostle here speaks of a confession that is mutual and reciprocal; *confess your sins one to another.* So that the confessor is to confess, as well as the confessed. It is undeniably plain then, that these words cannot mean the sacramental confession of the church of *Rome*; but the reason why the apostle recommends confession to one another is, because that by the prayers of each other, they *may be healed* of their sicknesses; for it immediately follows, "the effectual fervent prayers of a righteous man availeth much."

But the end of the popish confession is not to be cured of our sins and sicknesses, by the prayers of him we confess to; but to obtain the pardon of our sins by his absolution. And as there is in scripture no command, no practice, no mention made of this sacramental private confession, so there is much against it. For the scripture plainly requires

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other

* James 5. 16.

other terms of forgiveness of sins, and assures us of pardon and the mercy of God, merely upon our *confessing to God*, and *forsaking our sins*, without any thing more. *David* never thought of *auricular confession*, when he said, “ I acknowledge my sins unto thee, and mine iniquities have I not hid. I said I will confess my sin unto the Lord, and lo! thou forgavest me the iniquity of my sin*.” He farther adds, “ for this cause shall every one that is godly, make his prayer unto thee, in an acceptable time. Again, says St. *John*, if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness†.” Much more might be said to prove, that there is no foundation in scripture for this doctrine of confessing our sins to the priest.

And as to what they pretend, that this was the doctrine of the fathers, and the practice of the ancient christians; to this we answer, that public confession of notorious scandalous sins in the face of the church, was used in the primitive church, being part of the ancient discipline; we also admit, that private confession of sins to a discreet minister, to obtain direction and comfort to the penitent, was frequently recommended and practised. But then this makes nothing for the confession required in the church of *Rome*, because theirs was never enjoined or commanded by the church, as a duty incumbent upon all christians, till the council of *Lateran*, about four hundred years ago; which council also established the doctrines of transubstantiation, and deposing of princes if heretical. And even in this council confession was only enjoined as an ecclesiastical constitution, and not by any law of God. But the council of *Trent* decreed, “ private confession to a priest, to be the ordinance of Christ, and necessary to salvation.” So that auricular confession

* Psal. 32. 5. 6.

† 1 John 1. 9.

session as it now stands, was not thought necessary, till within the last hundred and fifty years. It is also certain, that the ancient fathers, so far from thinking private confession essential to repentance, or that it was instituted by Christ and necessary to salvation, that they taught the direct contrary; of which many instances might be given. "What have I to do with men, (saith St. *Austin*) that they should hear my confession, as if they could heal my disease." St. *Chrysostom* is also to the same purpose. "It is not necessary that thou shouldst confess in the presence of witnesses, let God only see thee confessing: I entreat and beseech you continually to make your confessions to God; shew thy wounds to him, and of him ask a medicine." And he hath many other passages to the same purpose. Thus doth St. *Austin*, *Chrysostom* and many others, directly contradict the *Romish* doctrine of confession.

And as they have neither scripture, nor the ancient fathers on their side, so neither is reason in favour of their confession. For they teach that every man is bound to confess all his mortal sins, even the sins of his thoughts and desires, that he knows himself guilty of, or otherwise he is not qualified for pardon. But how difficult must it be, for a man to know what sins are mortal; and what endless scruples and perplexities must this doctrine lead men into? Besides, according to their notion, not he that most truly repents him of his sins, and endeavours to forsake them, is best qualified for the mercy of God; but he who most minutely confesses them and enumerates their several circumstances to the priest.

To conclude; this confession, as managed by the church of *Rome*, is a great encouragement for sinners to continue in their sins. For they teach, that when a man is sorry for, and confesses his sins.

to a priest, and receiveth absolution, upon the promise to perform the penance enjoined, the person immediately receives remission of eternal punishment, and is restored to God's favour, and so he may go on again in the same course of life. All his old sins being washed away, he may sin a new, for it is but repeating his confession, and getting new absolution, and he is as safe as ever. Let then all impartially consider these things which I have faithfully represented, and then see, whether our doctrine be not more agreeable to scripture, to reason, and to the primitive practice; more tending to the ease, peace, comfort and edification of souls, than their doctrine is.

Let us all therefore when we are oppressed with the burden of our sins, apply to God, and confess them to him. And if we need advice, assistance, direction or comfort, we may call in the aid of pious and discreet ministers, which we ought in prudence to do. But still the confession necessary to pardon, must be made to God. Whoever humbly and sorrowfully confesses his sins to him, and endeavours to forsake them, such will find pardon, whether he confesses them to men or not. This is the protestant doctrine, and let us adhere to it, and practise it.

Another corruption of the church of *Rome*, in the matter of repentance, is their doctrine of *satisfaction*, which they make one of the three necessary parts of repentance. As to satisfaction, we all agree, that God, as the governor of the world, thought fit not to pardon the sins of mankind without some satisfaction made to him, for the breach of his laws; and that our Lord Christ, who was God and man, did in his own person, by his incarnation, cruel sufferings, and ignominious death, make such satisfaction to God for the sins of mankind, who thereupon was willing to pardon them. We also agree,

agree, that this satisfaction made by Christ, will be imputed to all true penitents, and be available for the salvation of their souls. Thus far we all agree, but in what follows we differ. We say, that according to the scripture, wherever the guilt of sin is remitted, there the punishment is also remitted; and this as to sins committed either before or after baptism. But they say, there is not the same remission of sins after baptism, as before it. For that a full satisfaction must be made for those after baptism, by the person committing them, or they will not be forgiven. They indeed allow, that every true penitent, by virtue of Christ's satisfaction, shall have his portion in the next life; but if he does not make satisfaction for all his mortal sins here, he must severely do it in the next world. They distinguish between the guilt and punishment of sin. They say, whoever repents, his sin is forgiven as to the guilt, so as not to die eternally; but that there is a temporal punishment still due, which the sinner must undergo, either here or hereafter: either by performing here such penances as the faults require, or by enduring hereafter the severe punishment of purgatory; which, as to the duration and severity of it, is very dreadful. The duration of it may last from our death till the day of judgment; and the sharpness of it as tormenting as the pains of hell, only not eternal.

But it may be asked how are these satisfactions made, and what remedy is there against these dreadful future torments? Why the council of *Trent* says, that satisfaction for our sins are made, partly by patiently suffering the afflictions sent us by God; and partly by performing the penances enjoined us by our priest upon confession. But still they have a much easier and better way than this. There is a stock of merits left to the disposal of the church, the merits of Christ, and also the merits of all the
saints,

saints, that were more than enough to satisfy for their own sins. These are the treasure of the church, and may be dispensed to particular persons, as the governor of the church, the vicar of Christ shall think fit. And there are two ways by which the benefit of these merits may be made over to us, namely, by indulgences; and by procuring masses to be celebrated, and alms given for us, after we are dead. And in proportion to these indulgencies or masses purchased by us, our future punishment will be lessened or removed. Nay, in proportion to our share of the church's treasure, we may never come into purgatory at all, or our time and pains be lessened and abated. Whoever understands their religion, will allow this to be the sense of their doctrine; but how false and unreasonable it is, will appear by the following particulars. And first, there is no ground in reason and scripture, that when once God hath forgiven the guilt of a man's sins, he should afterwards inflict any punishment on the offender. Secondly, their doctrine of purgatory, or a temporal punishment after this life, to be inflicted for not making a full satisfaction for their sins, though they have repented of them, and are forgiven by God, is a doctrine groundless, and against the tenor of scripture.

First, it is in the reason of the thing absurd, for any one to affirm, that God doth forgive the sins of christians upon repentance, but not excuse them from temporal punishment. Because the forgiveness of the guilt of a crime, naturally implies an exemption from the punishment due, otherwise it is not properly forgiveness. Indeed, good men after God hath forgiven their sins repented of, may be severely visited by God in this life; but then these sufferings and afflictions are not properly punishments for the sins God hath forgiven; but they are the natural result of the constitution of things here
below,

below, and God makes use of them as chastisements or trials to pious persons: they are inflicted not as punishments but as mercies; not as the effects of God's justice, but of his kindness; in order either to reform what is amiss, or that their faith, patience and other virtues, should be exercised to their own comfort and the benefit of others. These are God's discipline with his children, but not properly punishments.

Secondly, this doctrine of theirs is not only unreasonable, but expressly contrary to scripture. Our Saviour has taught us daily to pray, *forgive us our debts, (or sins) as we forgive our debtors.* But can a man forgive a debt, and yet at the same time require it to be paid. Either then there is no punishment exacted after forgiveness of our sins, or our saviour commands us to pray for what God will never grant. Besides, the scriptures represent the forgiveness of our sins, as perfectly free, and the meer effect of God's undeserved favour and goodness. But how can this consist with the popish notion of forgiveness; which supposes we cannot be absolved from the punishment of our sins, till we have paid the utmost farthing here or hereafter? But so far is God from exacting the punishment of any man's sins after he hath repented of them, that he expressly declares he never will do it. "If the wicked, says he, will turn from all the sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, (which is the true description of true repentance) he shall surely live, he shall not die. All his transgressions which he hath committed, shall not be mentioned to him," or as other translations have it, shall not be remembered to him; and if God will not remember nor mention them, surely he will never punish them afterwards.

DISCOURSE XVIII. Abp. Sharpe.

Of purgatory, contrition and attrition, mortal and venial sins.

Prov. 28. 13.

He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but who-so confesseth them, and forsaketh them, shall have mercy.

FROM this text I proposed to shew, that the church of *Rome* was corrupt, and had innovated in the scripture doctrine of repentance; and having already considered their doctrines of auricular sacramental confession, and satisfactions for sin: I now proceed to treat of another popish doctrine, namely, that all such souls as have not made satisfaction for their sins, while they lived, though they were remitted, so as that they shall never go to hell, but get to heaven at last; yet they must in another state undergo a most severe punishment in a place they call purgatory, till they be perfectly purged of their sins. But this they cannot prove, either from the scriptures, or ancient fathers. Indeed, there are two places which they urge in favour of it; the one is that of our saviour speaking of the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, which he says, shall neither be "forgiven in this world, nor in that which is to come;" from whence they conclude, there is a purgatory, or place for purifying of souls in the other state.

In answer to this, let me ask them one serious question. Did our saviour here speak of the forgiveness of sins in the other world, with respect

to the temporal or the eternal punishment due to them? If he spoke of the latter, then his words are much against purgatory. For they say, that the eternal punishment of sins are upon repentance, forgiven in this world, and not in the next; and that purgatory is only ordained as a temporal punishment of those sins, for which satisfaction was not made in this life. But if our saviour by these words means the forgiveness of temporal punishment in the other world for crimes committed here, which is their notion of purgatory, then they make our saviour to contradict himself; for they would make him say, that this temporal punishment which shall have an end, shall be an eternal punishment that shall never end; which is a flat contradiction, and overthrows their doctrine of purgatory.

The plain meaning of these words of our saviour, and what he designed to express by them, is this; that the contempt and blasphemy of the pharisees against the Holy Ghost, (which they were guilty of, by imputing our saviour's miracles to the power of the devil, and not to the spirit of God) was so grievous a sin, that it should be severely punished both in this world and the next; and the phrase he made use of was an allusion to a tenet of the *Jews*. For it was, and still is, a received doctrine among them, that for some sins, a man was presently pardoned upon his repentance; and that others were not forgiven till the solemn day of expiation; and others not to be expiated, but by some great temporal affliction; but that all would be forgiven at the offender's death, provided he was an *Israelite*, who as such must be happy hereafter. To this doctrine of theirs, our saviour seems to have respect, in the above words, and which is the full sense of the expression.

As for the other text urged by papists in favour of purgatory, it is that of *St. Paul*, who says, that if any man do build hay and stubble upon the foundations of christianity, which were laid by the apostles, his works should perish, and he suffer loss; *but he himself should be saved, so as by fire* †. From hence they conclude, that though the guilty person should upon his repentance, be eternally saved at last, yet he must be purged from his sins after death, by suffering the fire of purgatory. But it is very plain, *St. Paul* did not here intend an escape out of the fire literally; but such an escape as men make out of an house that is on fire; the words ought to be rendered, *should be saved, yet so as out of the fire*. This expression of escaping *as out of the fire*, was a common proverbial speech, among the *Jews* and heathens, in the apostles times, and is always used in scripture and other authors, to signify, the great hazard or difficulty of a man's escaping out of any danger. Thus, "ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning *." And that of *St. Jude*, "others save with fear, plucking them out of the fire." By which expressions are meant, the greatness of the danger and difficulty of escaping; so that from this text, no purgatory flames can be kindled. All that *St. Paul* says is, that the works of the teachers of false doctrines, those who misrepresented christianity, should be consumed; for time would discover truth, which should prevail at last. But the persons who by false teaching, thus *built hay and stubble, upon the foundation of Christ*, should for their prevaricating be in great danger of being severely punished; and yet upon repentance, they might escape: but it would not be without great difficulty, their condition was so very dangerous. Thus I have given an account of the only two

texts,

† 1. Cor. 3. 12. 15. * Amos 4. 11,

texts, on which the papists lay the greatest stress; and I hope all will be convinced, that they no way relate to a purgatory; indeed several of the *Romanists* themselves freely own, that neither of them are to be so interpreted. And as these texts do not concern purgatory, so there are many that speak against it.

The scripture doctrine, as to the condition of men after they depart hence, is, that there are two states hereafter for dead men, a good and a bad one. All who die true believers and sincere penitents immediately upon their death, enter into a happy state, where they shall continue till the day of judgment, when their happiness shall be completed, by the resurrection of their bodies. But all unbelievers, and wicked impenitent sinners, shall immediately upon their death, be put into a miserable condition, and so continue for ever, tho' perhaps their misery will not have its extreme completion till the day of judgment; as neither will the happiness of the other be perfected till then. This is the scripture account of the state of departed souls; but not a word do we there read, of souls lying in purgatory torments, but much against it.

Our saviour, in the parable of the rich man and *Lazarus*, seems thus to represent the state of the other world; namely, that the souls of good men immediately upon their death, are in a happy condition, and the souls of bad men in a state of torments. For when *Lazarus* died, he was carried by angels into *Abraham's* bosom, (by which the *Israelites* used to express the happiness and blessedness of departed pious souls;) and on the other side, the voluptuous rich man was immediately put into a state of torment; and though this be only a parable, yet we can never suppose the ground and foundation of it should be false. For it is evidently

ly plain from the whole current of the new testament, that all who die true penitents, and in the state of salvation, are immediately put into a happy condition, and consequently there can be no purging tormenting fire for them to suffer. St. Paul mentions two houses or tabernacles, the one of the body, that we are *now clothed with*; the other that *house from heaven*, with which good men shall be clothed upon in the other life. And when good men die, they go directly to Christ, to that heavenly tabernacle, and enter into that *everlasting city, whose maker and builder is God*. Our Lord Christ also promised the penitent thief upon the cross, that that *very day he should be with him in paradise*; meaning no doubt the state or place of happiness, that God hath prepared for good souls after their departure hence. For paradise is a term which both ancient and modern *Jews* express this by. As the thief was that day to be with Christ in paradise; surely none will say our saviour went to purgatory, but to heaven, where the thief also was: and what can more destroy the doctrine of purgatory and satisfactions than this? For if satisfactions be necessary as they say, and that purgatory be the place where they are to be made after this life, then according to their doctrine, the penitent thief must have long continued in purgatory. But he had made no satisfaction for the temporal punishment of his sins; and yet though he lived a vicious life, and died after a short and sudden repentance, we see he did not go to purgatory, but to the place of the blessed, where our saviour also went.

As to what may be objected, that this thief had not received baptism when he repented, but his shameful death was in the room of it, and consequently all his sins were remitted to him without satisfaction, as they are to persons before baptism,

tism, but not as to sins committed after it; to all this may be answered in the words of St. *John*, “blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, for they rest from their labours, and their works follow them *.” Here it is said indefinitely of all Christ’s disciples, who die in his religion, and fear, “that blessed are they when they die, for they rest from their labours.” But how can this consist with the notion of purgatory? If all who die in Christ, do rest from their labours, then surely none of them are punished and tormented after they are dead. For rest from labours is not consistent with those dreadful miseries and cruel sufferings, which souls in purgatory undergo. If this doctrine of theirs was true, such would only have a change, but not a rest from their labours. They would go from a light labour in this life, to a most heavy and insupportable one in the next. To suppose then, “that all who die in Christ, or that are true penitents, do rest from their labours,” and their works follow them, as St. *John* says, is to suppose them all in a happy blissful state, there to receive the rewards of their virtue and piety. So that the doctrine of purgatory is only a romance, invented without, and against the warrant of scripture, and contrary to the sense and doctrine of the ancient church. For it may be easily proved, that not one father or council of the primitive church, for five hundred years after Christ, ever taught the doctrine of purgatory, as the church of *Rome* now does; whereas we can produce several passages from the primitive fathers which make against it. Indeed, they quote *Origen* and *Tertullian* in their favour; but the testimony of neither of these will serve their cause.

As for *Origen*, his opinion was, (so far as we can collect from his writings, if they be his) that
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* Rev. 14. 13.

all the punishments God inflicted after this life, were such as would have an end; and that after a certain time, both devils and wicked men, having gone through their purgations, should be released from their torments. But what has this to do with the *Romish* purgatory, which they make distinct from hell; the former to be temporal, but the other eternal. And as for *Tertullian*, whilst he continued a catholic christian, he said not one word of hell; but after he left that communion and followed *Montanus*, whom he held to be the Holy Ghost, then he talked of a relief, which departed souls dying in an imperfect state were to expect from their sufferings by their *paraclete*, that is the Holy Ghost, whom he affirmed to be *Montanus*.

Having thus plainly confuted this popish doctrine, and which the most ordinary capacity may understand, I shall proceed to consider another erroneous doctrine of theirs concerning repentance, also of very bad consequence to the souls of men; which is, that they make *contrition* with the priest's absolution, sufficient to wash away our sins, and procure God's pardon of them. This is the avowed doctrine of the church of *Rome*, confirmed by the council of *Trent*; who give us this definition of *contrition*. "That it is grief of mind for sin committed, and a detestation of it, together with a purpose to sin no more. So that whoever is thus contrite, and confesseth his sins to the priest, and receives his absolution, promising to perform the penance enjoined, is from that moment put into a state of salvation." But we say, that this doctrine is against the notion of repentance declared in the text, and other places of scripture, and is of very ill consequence to the souls of men.

The words in my text, and many other places of scripture, by repentance mean, not only a sorrow for and resolution against sin, but also a forsaking

faking of it; only he that “confesseth and forsaketh his sins, shall find mercy.” Repentance in the original does not signify a transient passion for having offended God, or a sudden purpose to amend our lives, but an actual change of the mind and will, a transformation of the whole soul from bad principles to good; and where this is once effected, a new life, and different conversation will necessarily follow. A godly sorrow for sin, called by papists contrition, is not repentance, and cannot procure pardon; for this is only a preparation to repentance. “Godly sorrow worketh repentance, not to be repented of.” That which works repentance, cannot be repentance itself. And that contrition, with confession and absolution, puts a man into a state of salvation, is not only contrary to the scriptures, but tends also to prevent a good life; for it encourages men to continue in their sins, because it makes them think, there is no necessity for reformation of life.

According to this doctrine, if I am but sorry for my sins when I come to confession, and resolve to do so no more; upon the priests pronouncing a few words, I am absolved of the guilt of them, put into the favour of God, and if I die that moment, I shall be finally saved. And if I do not perform my resolutions, but return to my sins again, it is but repeating the same method, of being sorry, of resolving, and taking absolution again, and then I am as right as ever. And as often as I thus repent, so often are my sins forgiven me; and at my last hour, though I have all my life continued in my sins, yet this repentance and absolution will as certainly assure me of God’s favour, as if I lived never so innocently and virtuously; always excepting those purgatory punishments, which without satisfactions and indulgences I must endure in another life. Now upon these principles,
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how can any sinner who loves his sins, and is deeply engaged in a wicked course, ever think of reformation; and to go through the tedious fatigue of mortification and forsaking his sins, since to be sorry for them will do as well? Who would be at that pains, when he can obtain pardon and salvation upon so much easier terms?

And yet the representation I have given of this matter, is generally thought too strict and severe, and therefore they have even easier conditions for penitents to obtain pardon, than those I have mentioned. To impose contrition upon sinners, is too heavy a burthen, and therefore they have found out a more easy way to reconcile sinners to God, (supposing they confess and receive absolution) and that is, by *attrition*, or imperfect contrition, as the council of *Trent* calls it; for this with the sacrament of penance will do. Now, if contrition be a hatred of sin, with a resolution against it, then by attrition they must mean an imperfect hatred of sin, with an imperfect resolution against it; so that tho' a man be not so sorry for his sins as he ought, and hath only some imperfect resolutions against them; yet upon this slight repentance, his sins shall be forgiven by God. This most dangerous doctrine, is professedly taught by a great number of as learned doctors of that church, as any they have. It would be endless to quote authorities in this matter; among an heap of sundry authors, I will give you the words of one of their most eminent divines.

He affirms, that grave men, and famous in their church, do assert, "that a penitent having received the sacrament of penance, that is, having confessed and been absolved, is not bound to so much as one act of contrition, or the love of God, in order to his reconciliation with God; nay, allow a man hath hated God to the last act of his life,
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if he receives the sacrament of penance, they deny that it is necessary for him to be contrite for his sins, or to love God. That the excellency of the evangelical sacraments above the legal consists in this, that the gospel sacraments have freed us from the most heavy yoke of contrition, and of the love of God." Most truly pious and christian this; and are not these men excellent guides to conduct the souls of sinners? This is the doctrine not only taught by the wisest and and gravest of their divines, but is also the professed established doctrine of the church, and that of the council of *Trent* itself; for according to that council, "attrition, with the sacrament of penance, doth put a man into a state of grace."

And is it not a most wicked doctrine, that a little grief of mind, proceeding not from the love of God, but meerly the fear of punishment, and not accompanied with stedfast resolutions to forsake our sins, but only some slight purposes to live better; that this alone after a vicious life, and repeated acts and habits of sin continued in, should by the priest's pronouncing three or four words, cancel all a man's sins past, and so reconcile him to God, that if he immediately dies, he is sure of everlasting happiness? How doth this reconcile what in all other religions have been thought inconsistent, the love of sin and the love of God? An habit of vice and a title to eternal happiness? What wonder is it then, that so many dissolute persons go over to that church, where pardon and reconciliation with God are to be had upon such easy conditions? For it is much to be presumed that their design in leaving us, is not a reformation of life, but to continue in sin with greater security and comfort, than they could promise themselves in our way; many converts to the church of *Rome*, lead lives so bad, that no other religion but that

can give them encouragement to hope for salvation.

Thus I have considered three principal errors which the church of *Rome* hath introduced in the doctrine of repentance; namely, *auricular confession*; the necessity of *satisfactions* after God hath forgiven sins, upon which their doctrine of *purgatory* and *indulgencies* is founded; and that *contrition*, or even *attrition*, by virtue of the *sacrament of penance*, will put a man into a state of salvation. But there are several other doctrines, which people ought to be cautioned against, though I shall now only mention two.

The one is, that a man is not bound presently to repent of a sin, though it be a mortal one; all that we are obliged to by God's laws is to repent, *when we come to die*. One of their famous doctors avows this to be the doctrine of pope *Adrian* and cardinal *Cajetan*; and doth not this doctrine tend mightily to reform all wicked livers; or rather, can any thing give greater encouragement for a man to continue in his evil courses, than this doctrine doth? For, suppose I have committed some great crime that lies heavy upon my conscience, why, I need not be afraid, for if I presently confess my sins, and take up new resolutions, I may secure my salvation; and yet even this I am not bound to; for if I am but reconciled to God at any time before I die, it is enough. Now does not this kind of reasoning naturally tend to encourage all manner of wickedness? What can more effectually prevent reformation of manners, than this notion where it is really believed?

Another doctrine is their distinction of sins into mortal and venial; which is a great hindrance to true repentance, as it makes a man to think he is not obliged to mortify and forsake several habits of sin, which he knows himself guilty of. Indeed,

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we do in some sense allow, that there are sins of such malignity, or committed with such aggravating circumstances, that one act of them shall be mortal to any one guilty of them, unless he performs a particular repentance; and that there are other sins consistent with a state of grace, to which the best men are subject, and may sometimes fall into. But if they strive against, and daily beg pardon for them, these shall not be imputed to them at the day of judgment. For notwithstanding these ignorances and infirmities, they are within the covenant of grace, and God will for Christ's merits forgive the sins of those, who in the general lived up to the terms of the gospel. But then we also believe that all sins in their own nature are damnable, and that all unregenerate men will in hell suffer the punishments, as well of their small, as great sins; so that no sin in itself is venial; but only some sins, through the mercies of Christ, will without a particular repentance find pardon. And yet the most venial, light and inconsiderable offences, if indulged and encouraged, so as to increase and grow into habits, will then be no longer sins of infirmity, but God will consider them as wilful deliberate sins; and if the papists mean no more than this, we should not blame them. But by venial sins they mean, that there is a kind of sins, which may claim pardon from God, as of right; such as if all were joined together, could not equal one mortal sin; such as, however guilty we are of them, cannot put us out of God's favour, nor we eternally perish: and what is the natural consequence of this doctrine, but to make men careless of repenting, as to one kind of sins, and such too, as we are most inclinable daily to fall into, and therefore ought particularly to watch and fortify our minds against them?

The application and use I would make of all is this; that none of us would take our measures of repentance from men, however they may pretend to infallibility, but frame it according to those models, that God by his prophets and apostles, and our blessed lord, hath given us in the scriptures, which are the standing rule to govern and direct all mankind. That we would not be fond of new inventions, contrived only to make the way of salvation easier than Christ hath done in his gospel; but abide by those rules and directions which God hath given us concerning repentance: namely, a sincere sorrow for all our sins, an humble confession of them to our heavenly father, and forsaking them the remainder of our lives; for upon these terms *only* shall we *find* mercy. And that we would not think we truly repent, when we confess our sins to a priest, or are in pangs of sorrow for our many miscarriages, or even when we make the most solemn and severe resolutions to live better, unless by the fruits of our lives, we render these resolutions effectual; much less should we defer our repentance, and think it sufficient, if in our last hour, we endeavour to be reconciled to God: but as soon as ever we find ourselves guilty of any offence, let us humbly and sorrowfully beg pardon, and use all the means God hath appointed for our being restored to his favour; and let us not make such a difference between sins, as to think, that some may be safely allowed of, without fear of the divine vengeance, tho' some others will prove damnable. For we are to strive against all, remembering that every sin indulged and continued in, may prove fatal, and damnable to us. Lastly, let us in this affair of repentance, not be imposed upon, but carefully mind the wise man's words, "that he only who confesseth and forsaketh his sins, shall find mercy."

DISCOURSE XIX. Dr. Payne.

Of priests marrying, and vow of continency.

1 Tim. 3. 2, 4.

A bishop must be blameless, the husband of one wife.

THERE is nothing more specious in the church of *Rome*, and carries a greater shew of an uncommon purity and self denial, than their professed celibacy and virginity, and the vowed continency of their priests and others. As this seems a very high degree of mortification and abstinence from the allowed pleasures of sense, and all carnal enjoyments, and such a conquest over the strongest inclinations of our bodies, to the most mean and brutish passions; it has all the appearance of an angelical perfection, of a more singular and exalted sanctity, than is common to men; and so raises in some people, a great esteem and veneration for those who thus pretend to a more seemingly severe and spiritual way of living. But the unhappiness is, that those who have been the most remarkable for these affected abstinences, mortifications, and self-denials, above other christians, have generally had in them more of superstition and design, than of virtue and religion. The heretics of the first ages, who had the worst of characters for vileness and lewdness, were yet great pretenders to something of this nature. The *Gnostics* in the beginning condemned marriage, and abstained from flesh, that under these pretensions, they might, says *Epiphanius*, draw others into their snares. *Marcion*, *Montanus*, and *Manichæus*, persons

sons famed for such severities, were the greatest pests and disturbers that the church ever had ; and they who are for bringing in some imaginary perfection beyond what God requires, thinking to raise and refine christianity above the state that Christ left it in, by some improvements of their own, do generally miscarry in such their designs, to become wiser than God. They betray great ignorance and superstition, and do not truly understand either the nature of God, or of virtue, or religion, who imagine that these forced severities, and unnatural abstinencies from what is innocent, lawful and allowable, are any way good in themselves, or that they are a proper means either to merit of God, to procure his favour, or recommend us the more to him ; for how can it be evil and unlawful, less pure and perfect, to use those natural, free and innocent liberties and enjoyments, which God has not forbidden, or restrained us from, nor are yet in themselves matter either of virtue or vice ?

The false teachers in the apostles time, required persons to abstain from meats and marriages, with *a touch not, taste not, handle not* ; thereby deluding weak and unwary people with a false opinion of their greater sanctity. These things had a “ shew of wisdom, in neglecting the body, without any regard to the flesh for its satisfaction *.” These mortified saints seemed to have very little care or concern for the body ; and yet the apostles speak against them as the worst of men, as the greatest seducers, and preaching the doctrine of devils. How far they are guilty of this, who condemn the marriage of the clergy as carnal and impure, and unbecoming their sacred office and employment, shall be more fully considered presently. I only premise this here, to remove the foolish prejudice
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* Col. 2. 23.

and mistake of those weak and superstitious admirers of celibacy and virginity, who do not consider the nature of things, nor of the gospel and christianity as they ought to do. For as the one makes it sometimes absolutely necessary for the priests to marry; so the other plainly allows and approves of it. The priests of the old testament, when God required some peculiar purities of body, were all married; for marriage was as necessary then to preserve the church, as to people the world. In the time of the patriarchs, the elder son who was the head of the family, and obliged to keep it up, was a priest; and all now in the world derive their rise and original from a priest, who both sacrificed, and was a preacher of righteousness; nor is there any alteration made by our saviour, or his apostles in this matter; which no doubt would have been done, had they intended any such thing. How scripture then can be brought to plead against itself, and to condemn a bishop, a priest, or a deacon's having a wife, when it says of all of them, "let them be the husbands of one wife," is hard to imagine; unless papists can by their infallible power of interpreting scripture, make one wife in all those places, to signify no wife at all? For can any thing more clearly prove, God's allowing and approving of the marriage of the clergy, than these rules and directions of *St. Paul*. That "a bishop must be blameless, the husband of one wife, — having his children in subjection with all gravity." And if any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children, he was fit to be ordained an elder; and so, "let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well, — and even so must their wives be grave*." How contrary is all this, to what is now required in the church of *Rome*, that they

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[* 1 Tim. 3. 2, 4. Tit. 1. 6. 1 Tim. 3. 11, 12.

vow continence, profess virginity, and have neither wife nor children. But these places of *St. Paul* are such a clear demonstration from scripture, for the marriage of the clergy, that it is perfectly needless to add more.

I would here observe, that as no good reasons can be brought from scripture, against what it so expressly allows and approves, surely it must be a high reflection upon scripture, and the author of it, to make it oppose and contradict itself. Whatever our adversaries produce out of scripture, against priests marriage, is to prove the inconvenience, unfitness, or indecency of it; but would it not be very strange, that God should approve of what is indecent or inconvenient? How arrogant and assuming must it then be, for any church to judge better of those things than God himself, and to condemn that as unfit, which he allows. For even *Bellarmino* owns, “that there is no precept in all the scripture, against priests marriage.” And yet he would prove celibacy from an apostolical precept; but how he can do this, without contradicting himself, and *St. Paul*, in those places I have mentioned, I cannot understand.

What papists chiefly urge against the clergy's marriage, is, that there is a sort of impurity and indecency in the act of marriage, which renders it unfit and unsuitable to such sacred offices as priests are employed in. But in answer to this we say, that there is no such impurity. Christianity knows of no such impurity or uncleanness, but what is of a moral nature, against some law. The true essence and nature of all moral actions consists, in their being agreeable or disagreeable to some law of God and nature, and their tendency to promote such effects to the world, as are good and useful; a man's mind can no more be defiled by a physical impurity of the body, than the sun-
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beam is by the vapours of the dunghil, or, I may add, than the divine essence, by its presence in all places. It is only such thoughts of the mind, or acts of the will, which are contrary to a moral or divine law, that *defile the man*, as our saviour declares * against that pharisaical fancy and opinion, that some outward uncleanness of the body did so. He who acts with his body, or consents with his mind and thoughts, to what God disallows and forbids, defiles himself with a sin, which is the only defilement the soul is capable of; but to suppose it to be otherwise defiled by a bodily pollution, whereby to make a man unfit for the offices of religion, is to destroy morality, and to bring *Judaism* into christianity; and yet this has been the strongest prejudice against priests marriage, and the chief foundation of their celibacy and virginity; as having in it a greater purity of soul and body. But I shall proceed to examine some places of scripture which they pretend is in their favour.

One is that of *1 Cor. 7. 5.* where the apostle supposes and approves, but does not *command* as *Bellarmino* says, that married persons “abstain by consent for a time, that they may give themselves to fasting and prayer.” Hence they conclude, that if other married persons are to do so, for those ends, then priests who daily devote themselves to prayer, and other sacred offices of religion, are always to abstain. To which I answer, that the prayer which the apostle here means, was a set, solemn, and extraordinary time of prayer and fasting? All christians are to pray daily and continually as well as priests, and yet they are not thereby always obliged to abstain; indeed it may become both in some solemn and extraordinary times of devotion and humiliation, to abstain from the acts of marriage, as well as from their food, though

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* Mat. 15. 18.

there be no impurity in either, which is all the apostle means; and yet this he does not absolutely require.

Another place is that of 1 *Sam.* 21. 4. where *Abimelech* refused to give the holy bread to *David* and his servants, unless they kept themselves from women. From hence they would prove, that the priests who eat the holy bread or eucharist under the gospel are to abstain from women; but this will not do, though the shew-bread were a type of the eucharist; for the priests, to whom and their families it only belonged under the law, to eat this bread, were to eat it daily with their wives and children, and there was no law that they should abstain from their wives, when they did eat it. But this example was rather for laymen, such as *David* and his young men, to refrain from women upon that occasion, than for the priests. *Abimelech* by these words, “if the young men, have kept themselves at least from women,” seemed to require from them, a more than ordinary legal purity; and this without the least design to condemn priests marriage, or that they should totally abstain from their wives.

Another place is *Exod.* 19. 15. when the people were sanctifying themselves, to receive the law at mount *Sinai*, they abstained from their wives three days. But if any thing, this proves that the people as well as the priests, were to refrain from their wives upon extraordinary occasions. And when God shall be pleased to appear in so miraculous, sensible, and dreadful a manner, as he did at mount *Sinai*, we ought to meet him, with all that purity of soul and body which becomes his sinful creatures! Under the law he required them to be free from legal and ritual pollutions; and therefore they were to wash their cloths, as well as refrain from their wives. But under the gospel nothing

is required, when we draw nigh to God but moral purity, that is, a right disposition of mind, a freedom from sin, both in soul and body ; for that is the only pollution that defiles a man under the gospel. Therefore all that fancy of greater purity in any such abstinences, and of sinful pollution in the acts of marriage, is rank *Judaism*, and instead of a true christian and moral purity, it is bringing us back to the *Jewish* state, which was purely ritual and ceremonial, consisting, “ only in meats and drinks, and diverse washings, and carnal ordinances imposed on them, until the time of reformation * ;” wherein many such things were required as to the “ sanctifying and purifying of the flesh,” though as to the conscience, they signify nothing. But it is not a carnal and external, but an inward, spiritual and moral purity, by which God will now “ be sanctified in all them that draw nigh unto him ;” and the priests are thus with *David*, to “ wash their hands in innocency, and so compass the altar.” There is no manner of reason therefore, why priests should be kept from marrying, or denied a lawful use of it. Indeed, there is a natural shame attends those and other acts of nature, which modesty draws a curtain over, but none of them render a man less fit for the service of God, or unqualifies him for the administration of holy things, nor is there any reason why the one should do it more than the other ; and yet all the enemies to priests marriage, could never get this childish fancy out of their heads, that there was an impurity in it, unbecoming the sacred order. And to prevent this, they have introduced a real and horrid impurity, by scandalously allowing, or at least occasioning that concubinage, fornication, and other unlawful abominable uncleanness,

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* Heb. 9. 10.

ness, which their own authors complain of in their unmarried clergy.

This mighty pretence then, and concern for greater purity, and which was as much boasted of by the first heretics, as by the catholics; and their forbidding priests to marry on that account, comes very near to that doctrine of devils, spoken of by the apostle, 1 *Tim.* 4. 3. that, "they speak lyes in hypocrisy, and forbid to marry." The infallible church of *Rome* ought to consider this, for none are more guilty herein than themselves. *St. Paul* here speaks not of persons, but of doctrines; and what can be worse, than to disparage marriage, which is the wise ordinance of God to preserve the world in a state of innocence? And yet this is what the *Romish* church, and their heads the popes have done, who openly and publicly prohibit the marriage of the clergy. *Siricius*, the first who forbade it, did it, because they who were married, could not please God. "To the pure all things are pure, but unto them that are defiled with marriage, nothing is pure." This surely was making marriage a state of impurity, and unlawful carnality, which neither priest or laymen could live in and be a christian. Pope *Innocent* also in his decree against marriage of the clergy, says, "It is not lawful to admit them to holy offices, which use carnal company with their wives, because it is written, *be ye holy, for I am holy*," which makes marriage to be in itself unholy. Pope *Gregory VII.* came with more fury and violence, and thinking to establish the celibacy of priests, he calls their marriage "adultery, concubinage, and the inveterate disease of fornication in the clergy." And as pope *Innocent* had long before decreed them to be null and void, their wives were called whores, their children bastards, and it was even made heresy, to defend or believe the lawfulness of priests marriage.

marriage. To make marriage heresy, fornication, and adultery; a state of filthiness, uncleanness, and carnality, as supposing it renders a man carnal and unfit for divine things; and that it is more lawful for a clergyman to commit fornication, than to marry; all which are the avowed though scandalous doctrines of their greatest men, even of *Bel-larmine* himself: and if all this is not to make marriage evil in itself, and therefore justly to deserve the character of teaching the doctrine of devils, then I am much mistaken.

What abominable and even unnatural impurities have been brought into the church, by the forced celibacy and forbidden marriage of the clergy, to the scandal, not only of the sacred order, but of religion in general, have been the loud complaints of their own authors and historians. And they who upon pretence of greater purity, have prohibited the clergy to have wives, yet have allowed them concubines at a certain rate or price, upon their paying for licenses and dispensations. Some zealous popes, who would not hear mass performed by a married priest, have not only tolerated, but built public stews in *Rome*, and thereby brought in above twenty thousand ducats a year to their exchequer. So that their not allowing the priests to marry, seems not to proceed from a more than ordinary purity, but from some other ends more advantageous to the holy church; which is hereby not only vastly enriched, by those estates which would otherwise go to a wife and children, but it keeps herself and her clergy more independent upon the civil government, who have no such pledges and securities from them, as the married give. An *Italian* cardinal observed, “ that this inconvenience would follow from the marriage of priests, that having house, wife and children, they will not depend on the pope, but on their prince, and their love

love to their children, will make them yield to any prejudice of the church *." So that the prohibiting priests to marry, is mere policy, only to maintain the greatness of the *Roman* see, and to keep the clergy in a more strict dependence upon it.

I would not detract from the honour of virginity, nor let not others, from that of marriage; Christ has consecrated both, being born of a virgin, and yet of a married woman. There is no internal excellency or perfection of the one above the other, but the advantages to either depend on their being improved into such virtues, as tend most to the glory of God, and the good of the world; and which do most serve these ends, is impossible to be determined, for all times; and for all places. The greatest saints in heaven, which the scriptures speak of, were married; but this was no hindrance to their utmost perfection here, nor their highest happiness hereafter. Virginity is no more an heavenly or angelical state, than marriage, for they are only conditions of life, proper to this world. But in the next, there is neither male nor female, virgin nor married, husband nor wife, father nor child; for then all these worldly states and relations will be dissolved, and a final end put to all the parts we acted or appeared in on this scene of life. I shall now proceed to consider their vows of continence. And

We do not absolutely condemn all vows, as our adversaries falsely charge us; for if particular persons, who have the gift of continency, think fit to make any vow and resolution against marriage, as knowing by sufficient experience their being free from all danger or temptation, we no way condemn any such. But what is this to the imposing such vows upon a whole order of men; and obliging all who enter

* Hist. council *Trent*, l. 5.

enter into holy orders, to this perpetual continence, by a law that not only forbids marriage, but makes it void when contracted. So that the marriage of priests is esteemed by them not only a breach of an ecclesiastical law, but also a violation of a vow, and the use of it no other than fornication and adultery; for so it must be if the marriage be null and void: and yet it is declared by the infallible council of *Trent*, upon this groundless and mistaken principle, that all may have the gift of continency, that pray for it to God, and use other means to obtain it. But if this continence be a peculiar gift conferred by God only, and that all have not power to attain it, then it must be unlawful to vow, what is not in our power to perform; and it may be also lawful to break such vow, because of an obligation prior and antecedent to the making it. Let us therefore examine, whether according to scripture this gift of continence may be had by all; or if such who have not this gift, may not lawfully marry, notwithstanding any vow or church law to the contrary.

The strength and violence of natural concupiscence is so universal, that none of *Adam's* race is wholly without it. For it seems to be the natural result of our frame and make of flesh and blood; the greatest saints have complained of it, and all must acknowledge what a strong and powerful disease it is. This natural inbred fire may burn fiercer in some than in others, according to the different tempers and complexions of their bodies. But we cannot judge of others, but only by what we feel in ourselves, nor can we determine, whether it can be conquered any other way, than by that lawful marriage which God himself has appointed. He alone, who knows our frame, and whereof we are made, who searches the hearts and reins, can only resolve this. He who for the
good

good and continuance of mankind, implanted this strong passion and inclination in our nature, only knows what bounds he has set to it, and what restraints it is capable of. Indeed, experience teaches us, how incapable all men are of this perpetual continence; and scripture has also clearly revealed it to us.

“ All men, says our saviour, cannot receive this saying, namely, of not marrying, save they to whom it is given *.” And though St. *Paul* wished “ that all men were even as he himself, that is, unmarried, yet every man, saith he, hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, another after that *. I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, it is good for them if they abide even as I. But if they cannot contain, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn.” And of virgins, “ if need require, let them marry; nevertheless, he that standeth fast in his heart, having no necessity, but hath power over his own will, and hath so decreed in his heart, that he will keep his virgin, doth well †.” Do not these places of scripture plainly prove the necessity of marriage, and the impossibility of continence in all persons; and surely, the holy spirit better understands human nature, its frailties, and inclinations, than all the popes or priests of the church of *Rome*; who if their own historians are to be credited, have shamefully confuted this their doctrine, by their own leud practices to the contrary. Nor can they any way prove that this gift of continence may be obtained by all, but by that general promise, that “ whatsoever we ask of God, it shall be given us.” And they may as well pretend, that all may have power to work miracles, to remove mountains, to speak with tongues, or to procure any miraculous gift by their prayers, as to obtain this of continence; which God has no where promised to all men, and at all times,

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* Matt. 19. 11.

† 1 Cor. 7. 8, 9, 36, 37.

as not being necessary to their particular salvation, or to the edification of the church, or promoting of religion; for all those ends may as well be obtained by the lawful use of marriage as without it. And it is a great presumption, a meer tempting of God, to neglect those means which he appoints, and depend upon an unpromised relief, that he is not obliged to afford us; and so run into such dangers and temptations as we may easily avoid, upon a vain imagination, that God will endue us with an extraordinary power to perform, what he does not require.

A man may be very willing and desirous to have all his bodily passions and inclinations in such perfect government and subjection, as not to disturb and disquiet the ease and composure of his mind; so as never to have an angry, any more than a lustful passion. But whilst we carry this body of flesh and blood about us, we must not expect to be wholly free from those impressions of it, upon our souls; and therefore should use all proper means to prevent their betraying us to what is sinful and unlawful. And since many labour under great temptations, without the remedy of marriage, and the scripture assures us, that all cannot contain, and commands rather to marry than to burn, and requires a man to have his own wife to prevent fornication; it becomes unsafe, and unnecessary, to abridge ourselves or others, of what may be thus necessary: and because no man can be certain, whether he may never be under those dangers and temptations, he therefore ought not to bring himself under the obligation of a vow, nor deprive himself of the liberty, either to marry or not, according as he finds it most safe and expedient for him to do.

I proceed to consider, whether it be not lawful for those to marry, who have not this gift

gift of continency, notwithstanding any vow or church law to the contrary: against this, the papists produce many places of scripture, for performing of vows; as “pay thy vows unto the most high; when thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; better is it that thou shouldst not vow, than that thou shouldst vow, and not pay.” And the younger widows, who were under a vow not to marry, are by St. Paul said, *to have damnation, because they have cast off their first faith* *. So that they bitterly exclaim against those who married at the reformation; after they had been in orders, and taken this supposed vow of continence upon them, as perjured persons, and the most shameful vow-breakers, and violaters, of whatever is most sacred, binding and obliging. But to this we answer; that though all lawful vows are to be observed, yet these of continence are not lawfully made by such as have not the gift of continence, and therefore do not oblige; there being a prior and antecedent obligation for such persons to marry, as find themselves under great dangers and temptations without so doing, according to the commands of scripture, “it is better to marry than to burn.” And to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife; and if they cannot contain, let them marry; and I will that the young widows marry, though they were as much under a vow, as those who are said to “have damnation, because they have cast off their first faith.” These plainly declare marriage to be necessary in such cases, and then no vow can oblige against it; nor can any man, by a voluntarily tie, bind himself to act contrary to what God has by an antecedent necessity and prior obligation, bound him to. There are no such things as vows to be found in the new testament, nor of vowing and promising that

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* 1 Tim. 5. 12.

to God, which we are not otherwise obliged to perform.

Was I a *Romish* priest, and laboured under any uneasiness of body and mind, I would not in the least doubt to marry, notwithstanding any supposed vow, or law of the church to the contrary; but should think myself rather obliged so to do, than to tempt God and endanger my soul, by nourishing an inward fire, which if it breaks forth may prove mischievous and destructive, both to myself and others. And the first reformers, who married after they were in *popish* orders, are capable of so full a vindication, that they do not in the least deserve to be censured or condemned for it. In truth the church of *Rome* does not impose any such vow of continence upon its priests or clergy; nor is any such thing made by, or required of them, in their ordination; though they endeavour all they can, to prove there is a vow implied and annexed to orders, even by divine right, and always inseparable from them. But then how could a bishop, priest, or deacon, have been the husband of one wife, as *St. Paul* supposes them to be in his time? Or how can a vow be annexed to orders, without the ordained persons making of such a vow? For a vow is a free and voluntary act, and cannot oblige us, till we make it; so that was a priest bound to this perpetual continence, by never so many laws of God or man, yet he cannot be obliged to it by the force of a vow, till he has by his own act, freely made the vow; it being as plain a contradiction to say a man vows, what he does not vow, as to will and say, what he neither wills nor says. After all then, there is no such thing as a vow to restrain the *Romish* clergy meerly as such, from marrying, without entering into monastic vows; and it is only an ecclesiastical law of their own, and not of the whole church,
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that prohibits this: and we can by no means allow even the universal church, much less a particular one, such as that of the church of *Rome*, to have sufficient power to make any such law contrary to the natural freedom and liberty which God has left all men in; such a power being not for edification but destruction.

DISCOURSE XX.

Atterbury.

Of superstition.

Acts 17. 22.

I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.

ST. Paul perceiving the *Athenians* to be men of a liberal education and ingenious disposition, very inquisitive into religious rites and observances, and ready to comply with such as they thought would render the deity propitious to them; was inflamed with a holy zeal to them, and very desirous to bring them to the knowledge of the truth, and the worship of the true God. He therefore took all occasions of disputing with devout and well disposed persons, whether *Jews* or heathens; with the one in their synagogues, and the other in their market places, preaching to them Jesus and the resurrection; but they being very ignorant of the doctrines of the christian religion, and supposing that Jesus and the resurrection were two new Gods whom Paul adored, they took and brought him to *Areopagus*, a place of judicature

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in *Athens*, where all those who had any thing to propose, concerning the worship of the Gods, were to be judged. *Paul* having liberty to make his defence, begins with these words, “ ye men of *Athens*, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.” For the clearer understanding these words, it will be necessary to shew both the true notion of superstition in general, and in what sense we are to take it in the text.

The word in the original, which is here translated superstition, signifies only the fear of the Gods, and may be taken either in a good or evil sense; though it generally means the former; namely, such a fear of God, as engages us to worship and obey him. When taken in an evil sense, it imports such a slavish fear of the divine nature, as leads us into a mistake concerning the object of our worship, or the manner of performing it. *Maximus Tyrius* observes, that there is the same difference between a good man, and a superstitious person, as there is between a friend and a flatterer. The pious person having possessed his mind, with the goodness of God’s nature, approaches him without fear; but the superstitious having only an awe of God’s majesty and dread of his power, fear the Gods as so many tyrants. This is yet more fully described by *Clemens Alexandrinus*. “ Ignorance, says he, has two extremes, atheism and superstition; the first has no religion at all, the other too much; either worshipping demons and created beings instead of God, or the true God after a mistaken manner.” This being the true notion of superstition in general, I proceed to consider in what sense we are to understand it in the text. And it is very plain that superstition is here taken in an evil sense, because *St. Paul* blames the *Athenians* for being thus superstitious; it is evident they were faulty, both with respect to the object of their worship,

ship, and the manner of performing it. For they not only worshipped false Gods, but many unknown Gods, of whose nature and property they had no certain knowledge; so that they must needs err as to the manner of their worship, which was performed with such extravagant rites and ridiculous ceremonies, as very ill became the majesty and wisdom of the supreme being to receive, or of man to render to God. Having thus briefly explained these two points, I will now shew, in what particulars superstition among christians doth chiefly consist; from whence this superstitious temper doth proceed, and the dangerous effects of it; also by what means we may best discover it in ourselves, so as to prevent or free our minds from it; and then make some inferences from the whole.

As the *Athenians* were heathens, and had only the light of nature for their guide, no wonder if they erred, both as to the object and manner of their worship. For though right reason would have informed them, that there could be but one infinite and eternal spiritual being, who must be worshipped in spirit and in truth; yet reason *depraved* must needs be dazzled by the contemplation of so glorious an object. From whence we may easily collect, how absolutely necessary divine revelation is to rectify men's notions, and direct them in the right way. The only wonder is, that we christians who enjoy this glorious light, should err so grossly, and be guilty of such notorious superstitions, as will appear in the following particulars. First,

In mistaking the object of divine worship. There are many who call themselves christians, whose religion has degenerated into the worst sort of heathenism, by ascribing that worship to saints and angels, which is due to God alone. This is superstition in the most gross and notorious sense. Thus the papists pay adoration to saints and angels, regarding

garding them as an inferior sort of deities, to whom they pay homage, and make their addresses. It is true, they pretend a distinction, by saying they give to God alone the highest kind of worship, and to saints and angels only an inferior worship; but even this must be highly blameable, because they are forced to confess, that it is religious, and which does not receive the least countenance from scripture, but is directly contrary to many plain precepts contained therein. So that they most grossly err, by mistaking the object of their worship. Again, those who place the main part of religion in the performance of those duties, which God appointed only as *means* to obtain true virtue and holiness, are guilty of superstition. The rule of our religion is the word of God, which if diligently studied, will plainly direct us in our duty; and yet it will be of great use for us carefully to distinguish between the moral and instituted parts of it. For the one is of eternal and necessary obligation, but the other is enjoined us, only at certain times, and as instruments, whereby to attain those virtuous habits and moral endowments, in which our duty chiefly consists. When men lay so much stress upon the exercises of instituted religion, as to neglect the more weighty and necessary parts of their duty, and thereby undermine the very foundation of moral virtue, this is to be superstitious. Thus for instance, the observation of the *sabbath* was one of the principal points of instituted religion among the *Jews*; and yet Christ himself tells us, that this positive institution, ought to give place to the duties of natural religion, to works of justice or mercy; as if a beast fell into a pit, or any necessary work was to be done, the punctual observation of the *sabbath* was then to be omitted. And thus among christians, hearing the word, prayer, and receiving the Lord's supper, are indeed such ordinances
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of religion, as are absolutely necessary to be performed, though not on their own account, but only in order to obtain some farther end; namely, the grace and assistance of God, and such good dispositions and christian virtues, as may render us more like God, more holy, just, and good, and better disposed and prepared for the happiness of another life. For as under the law God declared to the *Jews*, that he abhorred their sacrifices, because they were an abomination to him, when performed by wicked men, and divested of moral goodness; so under the gospel, the bare exercises of religious duties will not be useful to us, nor acceptable to God, unless offered up with a pure heart and mind.

Such also as lay too great weight and stress upon the rites and ceremonies of religion, multiplying them without reason, and thinking the omission of them a greater sin, than the violation of God's law, are highly guilty of superstition. Because, they undermine the more necessary and vital parts of religion, and reduce the spiritual worship of God into external pomp and shew; they divert the mind from the object to the circumstance, and return again to the infant state of the *Jewish* church. Thus the pharisees of old by their traditions, and the papists now by their innumerable rites and insignificant ceremonies, clog their devotions, and corrupt and deprave the worship of God. That this is so, plainly appears from considering the end and design of divine worship, both with relation to God and ourselves. With respect to God, divine worship was instituted, that we might pay him that homage and adoration which is due from a creature to his creator; with regard to ourselves, that we might furnish our minds with those good dispositions, which are requisite to make us both holy and happy: that our confession of sin may make us more humble

humble and penitent, our intercession more charitable, and our thanksgiving more grateful to God for all his mercies and benefits. But when our minds are taken up with the pageantry of a splendid and formal worship, and of ludicrous insignificant rites ; it is impossible for us to fix our intention, either upon the object of our worship, or the subject of our devotions, and consequently our worship must needs degenerate into formality and superstition. Indeed, no action can be performed without some ceremonies, in gesture, time, and place, and for the greater decency and solemnity of God's worship, an uniformity in these rites is very requisite and expedient ; and therefore our first reformers retained some few of the most innocent ceremonies formerly used in the church ; and we are obliged both by the laws of God and man, to obey our governors in things lawful or indifferent. But whoever thinks he merits by the bare performance of the circumstantialia of religion, or that they make him a better or worse man, he is highly guilty of superstition.

There is another sort of superstition directly contrary to this, as when a man thinks that the serving God in spirit and truth, excludes all bodily worship, and the decencies of our external behaviour, all conformity to the injunctions of our superiors, and the customs of that church, in whose communion we live ; for a person may be superstitious in being zealous against ceremonies, as well as for them. And whoever places any great merit in being on the one, or other side, may be justly taxed of this sin. For he that is so scrupulous, as to admit of nothing in the worship of God, but what he finds plainly directed in the holy scriptures, takes away all christian liberty, and makes that excellent rule of *doing all things decently and in order*, of none effect. A rule set down to no purpose, if

all the particulars which ought to be observed in divine worship, had been distinctly enumerated in holy writ. And there can be no more dangerous superstition, than to be too scrupulous in matters indifferent, and to desire plainer proofs and arguments for the expediency of every usage of the church, than can be given for the disuse of it. And since such men possess their minds with ill-grounded and superstitious fears, it will be very proper to consider, from whence this superstitious temper proceeds, and which may chiefly be assigned to one of these following causes.

Superstition generally proceeds from weakness of judgment. For when persons have a great zeal for religion, and warmth of affection, but that their judgment is not sufficiently informed, so as to be able to distinguish between things absolutely necessary, and those which are only expedient or indifferent, to be either done or omitted; they will be apt to fall into *superstition*, by placing the main of religion in smaller matters, by being over zealous for *the mint, anise, and cummin*, things of little consequence, and yet neglect the weightier matters of the law. Again, *superstition* frequently proceeds from men's entertaining wrong notions of God. This is the natural consequence of the former. For weakness of judgment leads men to cloth God with their own passions, to fancy him such an one as themselves; and when their minds are once possessed with false notions of the object of their worship, this will influence all their religious acts. When persons of a timorous and melancholly constitution, entertain the notion of God, that he is an austere and rigid being, who delights in the misery of his poor creatures, "and willingly afflicts the children of men;" such will be apt to think of pleasing him with flatteries and little compliances, and to appease his anger, by "afflicting their bodies

dies for the sins of their souls." They will find out many ridiculous devices to quiet an angry conscience within, and to render propitious an offended God without; for it is the ignorance of the goodness of God's nature, of his inclination to make all his creatures happy, according to their different capacities, and to supply them with necessary good things, which causes these perplexities and consternations of mind, that many well meaning people, but of weak understanding, labour under, as to matters of no great moment, and yet such as are sufficient to render their lives uneasy and uncomfortable to them.

Superstition has also often its rise from men's sloth and laziness. There are many men who desire to be happy in another life, that will not take pains to be really good and virtuous in this. They would get to heaven could they do it on easy terms; but if it requires great pains and diligence to work out their salvation, this they are unwilling to do. They imagine that an appearance of religion is beneficial and creditable, and so think to please God and preserve their reputation, by complying with the formalities, the pomp and splendor of divine worship; and instead of living righteously, soberly and godly, they will substitute some external observances, some slight penances, indulgencies and pilgrimages; and in the room of a "new creature made after the image of God," they will have a creature of their own contriving, that is destitute of real and vital religion. For to attain moral goodness, to be humble, meek, just, good, and charitable; to perform a sincere and universal obedience; to resign up ourselves, and all our concerns to God's disposal; to mortify our beloved vices, our tendencies and inclinations to sin and vanity; this is to change our natures, "to cut off right hands, to pluck out right eyes," and will at

first cost a man much labour and pains. It is a difficult thing to root out, or unlearn an evil habit and disposition. But to make an appearance of religion, to join with the congregation in the instituted rites thereof and the public forms of devotion, and to abstain from meats, these are things more easily done, and lying open to the eye of the world, are encouraged and sufficiently rewarded, by the praise and commendations of men. Again,

Superstition doth sometimes proceed from men's allowing themselves in some one beloved sin. For when men's fears are awakened by the sense of guilt, or the apprehensions of danger, and yet unwilling to forsake their sinful pleasures, they will endeavour to compound the matter between God and their lusts; they will *bear the word gladly*, be more than ordinarily diligent and zealous in some parts of their duty, very strict and over righteous in the lesser and easier matters of religion; thereby, as they think, to bribe God to allow them in their darling vice, and conceal their wickednesses from men. From hence have proceeded many of those superstitious observances, which have been introduced into the christian church. I now proceed to consider the dangerous nature of superstition, as to the bad consequences ensuing from it.

And first, superstition is an inlet to atheism, as it raises in men's minds a base and servile fear of God, by producing such unworthy ideas of him as inclines them first to wish, and then to conclude, that there is no such *Being*; so that it tends both to banish him out of our hearts and the belief of his being, out of the world. Secondly, when once superstition has got possession of men's minds, it is with great difficulty rooted out; because it is not easy to discover it, nor yet when found, to conquer and subdue it. Its likeness to true piety conceals it from our notice; and it is too usual for
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men to deceive themselves and others, by an outward appearance, and seeming zeal for piety and religion; and when this bad habit has been introduced by insensible degrees, it will require much pains and labour to conquer and subdue it. An avowed profane wicked man, is condemned by his own conscience; but the superstitious person has his judgment depraved, and it must be difficult to persuade him, that he is in the wrong, when he so confidently thinks he is in the right. I do not say, a superstitious person is worse than one who is openly wicked and debauched; but only that it is with great difficulty he is convinced of his error and reclaimed, according to *Solomon's* observation, "seekest thou a man wise in his own conceit, there is more hope of a fool than of him." Thirdly, superstition is generally the cloak to some fundamental error in doctrine, or dangerous sin in practice. Thus the *Romish* church, whilst they amuse men's minds with the pomp of a ceremonious worship, introduce such doctrines and liberties in manners, as are inconsistent with the pure and holy precepts of the christian religion. And thus it is too common among some protestants, for to be over-strict observers of little things in religion, to make extraordinary pretences to piety and devotion, and yet to be guilty of the most scandalous immoralities. Since then, superstition is so dangerous an evil, and lies so much concealed from our notice, let us consider, how, and by what means, we may discover it in ourselves and others. And I would recommend the following plain rules.

Let us then consider, whether we do not lay too great a stress upon things of little moment in religion, and perplex ourselves because we have not been exact in some punctilioes of duty; as that we have not prayed so long or so often as we used to do, though perhaps our remissness in matters of greater concern,

we pass by disregarded. If this be the case, let us ask ourselves these questions; are we as careful to furnish our souls with all christian graces, and to perform a ready obedience to all God's commands, as we are to practise these smaller things? Does no lust remain unmortified, no sin unrepented of? Or, do we only mortify the lusts of the flesh, whilst we harbour and entertain the lusts of the spirit? For let men pretend to never so much temperance and sobriety, justice and honesty, piety and devotion; yet if they live in envy, malice, uncharitableness, censoriousness and spiritual pride; if they be led captive by their spiritual lusts, inordinately hanker after the wealth and grandeur of the world, making haste to be rich, and too eagerly pursuing temporal interests and advantages; all their pretences to religion are vain, and their zeal will degenerate into superstition. True and genuine religion transforms the mind and soul of man into the love of God, and charity to his neighbour; but superstition only regulates and influences the outward action. Again,

Let us consider whether our obedience proceeds from a principle of love, or only of fear. For if we serve God *only* for fear of punishment, it is very probable, that this slavish fear will draw us into many superstitious observances. Indeed, "the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom." And generally it is the fear of hell-torments, that makes men forsake an ill course of life; for "it is knowing the terrors of the Lord, says the apostle, that we persuade men;" and this will influence a man's actions all his life. Fear was placed in us, on purpose to keep us from things hurtful, and is then only criminal, when it makes us neglect our duty to God. But when a christian is arrived to "the fulness of stature in the Lord Jesus Christ," he must be also "rooted and grounded in the love of God." I do not mean by the love of God, such a familiar affection

affection of the mind, as one friend bears to another, but a passion composed of admiration and gratitude ; admiration of the wonderful excellencies and perfections of God, and gratitude for the innumerable blessings and favours he bestows on us. The one contemplates God as the best of beings, the other as our good friend and benefactor. Whoever is thus affected with the love of God, will endeavour to resemble him, and transcribe all his communicable perfections. He will serve him with gladness and humility of soul, and worship him with pleasure and delight. But the superstitious person who considers God as a severe, rigid, and inexorable being ; who takes all opportunities to afflict mankind, and is pleased with their miseries and calamities, must needs adore him with a forced worship, and pay him a constrained homage. He will give God the lip and the knee, but not the heart, and so mocks God whilst he pretends to glorify him. Such an one must expect a curse instead of a blessing, and that his sacrifice of prayer will be an abomination to the Lord.

The best methods we can take to avoid superstition, and free ourselves from it, will be to endeavour to understand rightly the grounds and foundations of our religion. For ignorance is generally the mother of superstition, not of devotion ; and when men have only imbibed general and confused notions of God and religion, they can never make a true judgment of the fitness of their actions, of the nature of God's worship, and how he will be served ; or which are the fundamental truths, and principal duties of the christian religion, and so will be apt to catch at the shadow, whilst the substance escapes. Let us then labour to gain such an humble temper of mind, as to become sensible of its own wants and frailties ; for pride puffs up, but humility shews things in a true light. It gives us the

right knowledge of our selves, and will inform us what kind of service God expects, and how we dependent creatures ought to address the great creator and governor of the world. And let us affect our minds with right notions of the divine perfections, especially God's goodness. Let this attribute be the subject of our daily thoughts, and this notion be frequently in our minds, "that to be God and essentially and infinitely good, is the same thing." Such meditations as these, will strike at the root of superstition, and erase out of our minds such false notions and ideas of the deity, as render him dreadful and terrible to his creatures. Lastly, let us strive to be really good, rather than appear so. Let our chief care be to cultivate our minds, to purify our hearts and consciences, to be holy, just, merciful, humble and peaceable, because these virtues will derive a lasting influence on our outward behaviour; whereas, if we harbour pride, malice, envy and uncharitableness in our hearts, these will some time or other appear, though we disguise them all we can. Having thus proposed the most effectual means to disengage our minds from this superstitious temper, I shall conclude with a few inferences from what has been observed. And,

Hence it appears, that a man may as well be too religious, as *righteous overmuch*. Prudence ought to guide our devotions, as well as our virtues; for as a man may be very unjust, who observes the letter of the law; so he may be highly superstitious, who is too scrupulous in every punctilio of his devotions. Excess in the best things has the most pernicious consequences. That wine which moderately drank, *rejoices the heart of man*; when abused to intemperance and excess, makes men's heads turn round, and deprives them of their reason; such a giddiness as this is what an ignorant zeal for religion produces in the minds of superstitious

tious men. There are some so scrupulous as to render their lives miserable, by disturbing themselves upon every little omission of duty, though never so involuntary. Such are very apt to believe the threatnings of God's law, but regard not the gospel promises; they employ their thoughts so much on God's justice, as to forget that he is good and merciful. This often proceeds from a melancholly constitution, which inclines them to imbibe superstitious thoughts of God, and to entertain unbecoming notions of his justice. Let such as these consult their physician as to the malady of their bodies, and then offer zealous and fervent prayers to God, that he would be pleased to comfort their drooping spirits, and in his good time speak peace to their souls. But much more dangerous is the condition of those who fall into the other extreme. And therefore from what has been said, we may learn from whence all that formality and hypocrisy, which is too visible amongst all sorts and persuasions of christians doth proceed. For as ignorance is the mother, so hypocrisy is the daughter of superstition. I will conclude this discourse in the words of archbishop Tillotson.

“ * And is it not to be feared, that there are many who fall into this mistake about religion, and think if they do but serve God in their families, and go to church, and behave there with devotion and reverence, and at certain times receive the sacrament, that they are truly religious, and very good christians? when all this while they take no care to improve themselves in real goodness, by an inward conformity of their minds to God, and the real reformation and amendment of their lives, by mortifying their lusts, and subduing their appetites and passions, to the laws of reason and religion; by
“ putting on, as the elect of God, bowels of kindness.”

ness:" By being true and faithful, righteous and just, patient and merciful, as is their father which is in heaven; and by forbearing one another, in case of provocation, and "forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven us;" when all this time they are covetous, and earthly minded, and their passions as fierce and ungoverned, their hearts as full of gall and bitterness, their tongues of slander, evil speaking, and censoriousness, as theirs who are openly profane, and seem to neglect and despise all religion; and yet because they make an external appearance of piety and devotion, they think, and are fully persuaded, that they are in the favour of God, and a state of grace."

DISCOURSE XXI. *Clark.*

The nature of true christian zeal.

Rev. 3. 15.

*I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot,
I would thou wert cold or hot, &c.*

Religion is the great ornament and glory of human nature; that which principally distinguishes men from the inferior orders of creatures; and upon which alone are grounded all hopes of life and happiness hereafter, when this short, transitory world shall be passed away. In a matter of so great importance therefore it is very wonderful, that man, who is a reasonable creature, should be
careless

careless and indifferent ; careless, whether he has any religion, or none ; indifferent, whether his religion, when he does profess any, be true or false : careless when he has embraced the true religion, whether he makes any improvement in his practice answerable to it or not.

The words of the text, are a reproof sent by our saviour to the church of *Laodicea*, upon account of their remissness and lukewarmness in this last particular. “ I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot.” The defect was in their works or practice. They did not lay aside the profession of religion, and yet they would not live answerable to it, by being “ zealous of good works.” They, it seems, prospered in all worldly appearance, and had much *form* of religion ; and yet knew not that they “ were wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked ;” that is *naked*, or destitute of the works of righteousness ; and *blind*, or insensible of their dangerous condition. We have in these words an intimation, wherein the nature of true zeal consists. “ Thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot,” is the reproof for want of zeal ; and I “ know thy works, that thou art blind and naked,” intimates what was the zeal they wanted. Since then, these things are for our example, and that the scriptures are written for our admonition, “ upon whom the ends of the world are come ;” it cannot be improper to enquire for our own instruction into the nature of true zeal ; and also of that false zeal, which is apt to make christians think themselves to be spiritually *rich*, and to have need of nothing ; when indeed, they are most “ wretched and miserable, poor and blind, and naked.” True zeal then, which is the virtue of a christian, may be generally distinguished from false zeal, which is the character of private parties or factions, by three ways:

by the object about which it is employed ; by the manner and circumstances in which it expresses itself ; and by the end to which it is directed.

One mark by which true and christian zeal may be distinguished from what is false and unchristian, is the object about which it is employed. The object of true christian zeal is the study of truth, and the practice of right ; the continued, impartial, unprejudiced enquiring after truth ourselves, and the giving constant encouragement to others also to search for it. The conforming our own practice to the unquestionable eternal rules of right and equity ; and continually using all just, honourable, and christian means, to prevail with others to do the same. On the contrary ; the object of false and unchristian zeal, is not an impartial enquiry, what and where the truth is ; but always consists in violently promoting, establishing, and forcing men into the profession of some imagined truth, without ever duly considering, whether it be a real truth or no : and in like manner, the insisting on the practice, not of such acts of virtue and righteousness, as are certain and indisputable ; but of such things and practices as are principally built upon the distinguished opinions of particular sects or parties.

Thus the primary and proper object of a good christian's zeal, is the promoting the practice of virtue and righteousness ; but since right practice cannot be built with any certainty and steadiness, but upon the foundation of truth ; therefore the first object of our zeal in the order of nature, is the knowledge of truth ; in searching after which we can never be excessive. " The price of wisdom is above rubies, not to be valued with pure gold. Buy the truth and sell it not, also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding.*" We must search

* Job 28: 18. Prov. 23, 23.

search the scriptures with an unbiaſſed underſtanding, that in them we may find the words of eternal life. This zeal therefore, a zeal for inquiring and ſearching after the truth, in order to know perfectly the will of God, can never be faulty in exceſs ; all faultineſs upon this head, is always on the defective ſide ; a want of zeal, lukewarmneſs and indifferency in men, whether the things they profeſs to believe, be true or not ; ſuch receive things ignorantly or negligently at all adventures ; they take their religion upon truſt, without being ſolicitous to underſtand it, or know what they embrace. Hence, though the doctrine of Chriſt is ſo plainly and clearly expreſſed in the goſpel, that he “ who runs may read it ; ” and that all chriſtians have been baptiſed into the profeſſion of the ſame faith, and into an obligation to obey the ſame commandments ; yet for all this, what hath vulgarly been called *chriſtian religion*, has been at different times, in theſe and in diſtant countries, as different from itſelf, as light is from darkneſs. God having moſt juſtly “ ſent men ſtrong deluſions, that they ſhould believe a lye.” That they ſhould entertain innumerable, incredible abuſivities ; becauſe they receive not the truth, according to the ſimplicity of the goſpel of Chriſt. The firſt and original cauſe of all corruptions in religion, is the want of zeal to enquire after truth ; a coldneſs, careleſſneſs, or indifferency in men, whether what they profeſs to believe, be true or not. But then, if we have never ſo much zeal for, or ſucceſs in enquiring after truth, yet even this is nothing, without a virtuous practice ; ſo that the great, principal, and proper object of zeal, is the practice of virtue and true righteouſneſs ; and here likewiſe our zeal cannot be too great. Men may miſtake the object, and be zealous for ſomething elſe inſtead of virtue ; or, when the object is right,
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the manner and circumstances in which it expresseth itself, may be very faulty ; but the degree of zeal for virtue, righteousness, and equity, cannot possibly be too great. *St. Paul* saith, it is good to be zealously affected in a good matter *. And the zeal of the *Corinthians* in their liberality to the poor of other churches, is by the same apostle commended as highly exemplary ; and our saviour says, “ my meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.” And again, “ the zeal of thy house hath eaten me up.” This is the full notion of a good christian zeal, with respect to the object about which it is employed. It is a zeal for the knowledge of truth, and for the practice of right ; and this zeal, if it be not faulty in other circumstances, the degree of it can never be excessive. Men can never be too zealous to enquire impartially after truth, or to do what is confessedly right.

But this will be further illustrated, by considering the nature of false and unchristian zeal, with regard to the object about which *that* also is employed ; which, as I before observed, is always some imagined truth, never carefully examined, whether it be really so or not ; or else some form or ceremony, of no great moment to religion and virtue ; or perhaps some practice founded upon the distinguishing opinion, of some particular sect or party. Thus for instance, many of the *Corinthians* were zealous for *St. Paul*, others for *Apollos*, and some for *Cephas*, but such zeal was not spiritual, and for the religion of Christ ; but carnal, for parties among men. The same apostle also tells us, that some upon the foundation of Christ, instead of gold, silver, and precious stones, built wood, hay, and stubble. The meaning is, they were zealous for opinions, of which they had not carefully

* Gal. 4. 18. 2 Cor. 9. 2.

fully examined the truth ; for doctrines, which had no useful influence on practice ; for forms and ceremonies, which did not make men more careful to lead virtuous lives ; of this sort our saviour speaks in the words following my text, *ver. 17.* “ thou sayst I am rich, and encreased with goods, and have need of nothing ; and knowest not, that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.”

To mention but one instance more ; the whole body of the *Jewish* nation, in our saviour's days, were extremely zealous to observe the law ; but it was a zeal without knowledge, and careful examination ; it was a zeal for the ceremonial part of the law, more than for the moral ; a zeal for the traditions of the elders, and for the doctrines of each others particular sect, more than for the law of God : and even the zeal which they had for the law, was without considering, that the very end and design of the law was to lead men to the gospel ; that it was itself in its own nature but a type of Christ ; and that God by the prophets had all along clearly enough intimated, that there was to be such a change in the dispensation. For want of carefully and impartially considering these things, even those *Jews* who were converted, still continued all *zealous of the law* ; and were very earnest to enforce the observation of it upon other christians ; and those of them who were not converted were extremely zealous, in their opposing the gospel. “ I bear them record, says *St. Paul*, that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge ; for they being ignorant of God's righteousness, (*of that method of salvation which God has appointed*) and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God ; for Christ is the

end

end of the law *." Of these St. Paul himself before his conversion was one; "according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, I was zealous (says he) towards God, as ye all are this day; being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers, touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless; concerning zeal, persecuting the church, because I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus †." For when the object of zeal is not the searching after truth, and the practice of moral virtue, but the inconsiderate and rash promoting, with violence, some unexamined or imagined truth; then it often happens, that even zeal itself for truth, degenerates into the most inveterate prejudice, and incurable obstinacy against it; and puts men upon the most unrighteous methods of propagating as they think, but in fact of opposing it. Our saviour saith, "they shall put you out of the synagoge, yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doth God service. These things will they do unto you, because they have not known the father, nor me †;" that is, because they have no true notion, either of natural or christian religion. Thus is the malignity of this sort of prejudice most lively expressed. "They stopped their ears, and ran upon Stephen, and stoned him. They were, as the Psalmist says, like the deaf adder, that stoppeth her ears; which refuseth to hear the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely †." Our saviour describes the unreasonable prejudices of the Pharisees, by the same figure of speech, "why do ye not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear my word;" that is, their vicious

* Rom. 9. 31, 32. 10. 2. † Acts 22. 3, Gal. 1. 14. Phil. 3. 6. Acts 26. 9. † John 16. 2, 3. † Acts 7. 57. John 8. 43.

vicious and corrupt inclinations, would not suffer them to hearken to the truth.

Another mark by which a true and christian zeal may be distinguished from what is false and unchristian, is the manner and circumstances in which it expresses itself. Zeal cannot be a christian virtue, unless employed in searching after truth and the practice of right, which is its true and proper object: nor is this sufficient, for though zeal cannot possibly be excessive in its degree, if fixed on a good object, yet if care be not taken, it may easily degenerate into a false and unchristian zeal; "wrath and fierceness, contentiousness and animosity, violence and hatred, are vicious and ungodly practices, whether the object of a man's zeal be good or bad." St. Paul was not only faulty for persecuting the christians, when himself was a Jew, but he would have continued equally so, had he persecuted the Jews, when he became a christian. When the disciples would have called for fire from heaven upon the Samaritans, our saviour rebuked them, saying, "ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." And St. Paul directs, that "the servant of the lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves *." And he advises all christians, "to let their moderation be known unto all men." Such moderation was not to consist in a lukewarmness or indifferency for religion, or for the great and weightier matters of the law, (which was the thing reprobated in the text, and very consistent with being zealous about trifles) but St. Paul by moderation, means that meekness, calmness, and equitable spirit, which well agrees with, and usually accompanies, the highest possible zeal for truth and virtue. And the same apostle thus complains of the

* 2 Tim. 2. 24. Phil. 4. 5.

the want of this spirit; “whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men *.” That is, do you not act like men who are more concerned for your own private parties and passions, than for the religion of Christ? “Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us;” that is, you are puffed up, grown insolent and domineering in your several parties and divisions, one against another: like our saviour’s rebuke of the church of *Laodicea* in the text, for being careless and lukewarm, in the works or fruits of true religion; “yet thou sayest I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not, that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.”

But however right the object of our zeal be, yet if it is accompanied with the “wrath of man, it worketh not the righteousness of God.” For wars and fightings, hatred, animosities, contentiousness and desire of rule over each other, can only proceed from our lusts and passions, not from zeal for true religion. And whoever takes delight in injuring his brother, it is absurd to say it is done out of zeal towards God. For, “if a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother he is a liar †.” Great regard is also to be had to the end and intention of our zeal. Zeal for inquiring after truth, may possibly be nothing but curiosity; or a zeal even for doing what is right, may sometimes proceed meerly from temporal views, which may be indeed a useful and commendable passion, if the manner and circumstances in which it is expressed, be not faulty: yet nothing makes it properly a christian virtue, but when together with all the before-mentioned requisites, the end or intention to which it is ultimately directed, does

also

* 1 Cor. 3. 3, 4, 8. † 1 John. 4. 20.

also tend to, and is for the honour and glory of God. I mean not by God's honour and glory any thing imaginary, or enthusiastic, which often turns religious zeal into the worst and most pernicious vices; but only the establishment of God's kingdom of righteousness here, in truth and peace, and charity; in order to the salvation of men's souls hereafter in his eternal kingdom of glory: and if we remember the end, we shall never do amiss*."

From what hath been observed concerning the nature of a true christian, or a false and mistaken zeal, we are naturally carried to consider, of what mighty importance it is to every man to have his conscience rightly informed; when God hath given us a rule to walk by, and hath declared, he will take a strict account of our actions, according to their conformity to or disagreement with this rule; it highly concerns us, to make his laws the constant measure of our designs and behaviour, to examine every thing by that standard, and to proceed with sobriety, impartiality, and great exactness in such examination. The plausible pretences of the church's cause, of liberty and property, and religion, will not justify our being carried away by heat and prepossession, by faction and party, by enthusiastic and wild imagination; and yet all this may sometimes be the case of very well intending men; from the inveterate prejudices of an unhappy education, from the particular complexion of their minds, or the warmth of an eager and blind zeal. But God requires, that reason and religion should be the compass for all his servants to steer by, and to moderate and subdue their humour, passion, and interest, and bring all these to an entire obedience.

This also shews us the horrible mischiefs of violent and obstinate prejudice. There is no opinion so absurd,

* Stanhope 12 ser. p. 308, &c.

absurd, but men may be brought to believe and embrace it; no crime so black, but they may confidently engage in it, and yet still think themselves in the right; and the reason for this evidently is, that such people, when they consider, begin at the wrong end. For instead of coming to their rule with minds open and unbiassed, and free to entertain truth, when discovered; they on the contrary, bring their own notions and impressions along with them; and resolve to admit of nothing for just and true, but what agrees with their own principles. Hence they stretch and bend the rule, to bring it to their own crooked affections and designs. Hence we see holy missionaries divide, that they may devour; and from the ignorance and credulity of the people, take advantages of kindling such a furious zeal, as sets whole kingdoms in a flame; as blows the coals, till all the soft relents of human nature are consumed, and makes their proselytes ten times more the children of hell, by a false hope of ensuring heaven to themselves. Instead of correcting the extravagances of cruelty and injustice, by christian considerations of mutual forbearance, subjection to governors, and meek suffering; they render their instruments more turbulent, barbarous and cruel, upon the pretence of serving a church or a cause. Deliver us, good God, from such dangerous delusions, and let us not fall into the hands of such men, as think they do thee service by our destruction. For when blood is esteemed a sacrifice, and persecution commences principle, compassion from thenceforth becomes a crime; and the tenderest mercies of a zeal thus inflamed, will be sure to prove the very extremity of cruelty.

But let not this disorderly zeal of our bitterest enemies, or the most dreadful consequences of it, extinguish our charity for such mistaken men; no,

let

let "us bless them that curse us, and pray for them who despitefully use us, and persecute us."

We may and ought to take all prudent methods of guarding ourselves against the mischiefs of a set of principles, which would, if suffered and pursued, lay all in ruin and confusion; but we must not let our fear or resentment transport us to the like extravagance which we condemn in others. And therefore while we are providing for our own safety, we must not forget what will be our surest defence, the securing providence on our side, by entitling ourselves to God's blessing, upon all fair and lawful means for our safety; and such are the daily addresses, "that he would bring into the way of truth, such as have erred and are deceived." And inviting the mistaken over to our persuasion, by that christian meekness and gentleness of temper, which may assert the credit of religion, and prove that God is in us of a truth.

"I shall in the last place conclude with the more immediate business of the day*. A day particularly auspicious to the *English* church and nation; and doubly signalized by the repeated preservation of the reformed religion, and our civil liberties. First, by the strange and seasonable discovery of a most barbarous and hellish treason, whereby the king and royal branches, the flower of our clergy, nobility, and gentry assembled in parliament, were marked out for the slaughter, and intended to be made a burnt sacrifice, by that blind fiery zeal I have been speaking of. The horror of so many precious lives destroyed at once by an unseen blow. The dismal confusion of so many immortal souls, hurried into eternity, without any warning of their sudden change; nay, without time to say, *Lord have mercy on us*. The darkness, the misery, and general consternation, which must have covered the

the face of the public, are as impossible now to be expressed, as they could have been prevented, had not the watchful providence of God, in a most critical minute interposed. - These things "we have heard with our ears, and our fathers have declared unto us, the noble works God did in their days, and in the old time before us." But others of a like nature, our own eyes have seen. Bold and illegal attempts to throw down our fences, and root up our vineyard; and the worst of slaveries endeavoured to be introduced, partly by a secret and subtle, partly by a high hand: The resentments of those who profess to be champions for liberty, and the power of a prince unhappily misled, made instruments to lay a yoke upon our necks, which neither our forefathers, nor we, were able to bear. And here again, the same good providence was eminently conspicuous, by defeating the counsels of our adversaries; and ordering matters so, that our safety should come, not from our own, but from a nobler and better hand. A safety, bearing date from this once more prosperous day; and that so innocent, that the generality of the nation had nothing left to do, but merely not to refuse their own happiness. If then our properties as a people, and our reformation as a church; if the rights of a monarchy independant on the usurped supremacy of *Rome*, and the allegiance of subjects free from the controul of foreign tyranny; if the undisturbed exercise of a religion truly rational, primitive and pure, and the regular execution of laws most just, wise, and beneficial; if the privileges we claim by our statutes and customs, as natives, and the yet more sacred and inviolable rights belonging to us, as christians; if *true* sacraments decently *administered*, void of idolatry and superstition; if prayers edifying, because intelligible to our people; if the scriptures freely communicated, and ready access to those wells

wells of salvation, are not only allowed, but enjoined and urged to every soul that thirsts after righteousness; if all these be comforts and advantages worthy our notice and esteem; then have we abundant matter of joy and praise, of thanks and wonder. Then can no true *Englishman* and protestant think any honours or solemnities too great, too lasting, for a day which on so many accounts is marked out to honour; a day so fruitful in blessings to these kingdoms, to the reformed religion, to *Europe* in general, as is the most deservedly, and I will add too, the most devoutly to be celebrated fifth of *November*.

I do not therefore call upon you to remember the blessings of this day; we must even forget ourselves not to do that: or, were we, which God forbid we ever should be, abandoned to a spirit of ingratitude, base enough to neglect them; yet even then, it is but too plain, the restless attempts of our enemies fail not to refresh our memories; and our repeated dangers from the same quarter, will not suffer us to forget them. But it may be proper to remind you in what manner they should be remembered; we can never think the ceremony of an anniversary thanksgiving, will suffice for this purpose? No; these alone are but an empty pomp. If we have a just sense of our preservation, we shall be careful to walk worthy of it, and not contract any such guilt, as we have reason to fear may forfeit and deprive us of these benefits. We then are thankful for our civil liberties, when we apply all prudent methods for the common security; when we lay aside all faction, party and prejudice, and heartily unite in charity and peace; that and we all move like a body animated with the same soul, to save ourselves against all breach of public faith, and every unjust invasion of them: when we rest not in outward forms, or a false estimate of ourselves,

selves, as professors of the best doctrines; but give all diligence to express the peculiar excellence of our principles, by the proportionably exemplary purity of our conversations. When we worship God in truth and in the beauty of holiness; observe justice in all our dealings, moderation to the mistaken, meekness towards our enemies, charity towards all men: in a word, when we live as christians, and love as brethren. Such is our doctrine, and such ought to be our practice; and no one thing would more contribute to this, than for us to lay aside all unreasonable prejudices, and to suffer all those heats to go out and die, which have too long divided us from one another; and by heartily joining in the communion and defence of the established church, which frequent experience hath shewn, to be the best and most impregnable bulwark of the reformation. Such methods as these might give us reasonable expectations, that God will, and grant that he may, continue and multiply his mercies towards us. Thus would our *Jerusalem* be a city at unity in itself; and when it is so, it will soon be the joy and wonder of the whole earth; and the benediction of *Moses* may be applied to our selves, "happy art thou, O *Israel!* who is like unto thee? a people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and the sword of thy excellency; thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee, and thou shalt tread upon their high places." So be it to our *Israel*, O Lord, and let them prosper that love us: but let the wicked conspiracies of as many as have evil will at our *Sion*, continue to be like the untimely fruit of a woman, which never sees the sun; that whatever evils the malice and subtlety of the devil or man worketh against us, being by God's providence brought to nought and utterly dispersed, we thy servants, being hurt by no persecutions, may evermore give thanks unto thee, in thy holy church, through Christ our Lord.

DISCOURSE XXII. *Whitby.*

The cruelty and persecution of the *Romish* church.

Luke 9. 55, 56.

Ye know not what spirit ye are of; for the son of man is not come to destroy mens lives, but to save them.

OUR blessed lord told his disciples, “ that the time would come, when they that killed them, should think they did perform the most high and acceptable act of worship to God.” And tho’ this was then actually done by the hatred, which the unbelieving *Jews* bore against all christians, yet it has been more fully and tragically completed, by the decisions, decrees, and practices of the court and church of *Rome*. I shall therefore endeavour evidently and clearly to evince and prove, that these decrees and practices of the church of *Rome*, are highly opposite to the true spirit of christianity, to the laws of Christ, to the doctrine and practice of the primitive church; and consequently, that the church which makes these sanguinary decrees, and perpetrates these inhuman butcheries, must be a false church, and guilty of the blood of myriads of Christ’s disciples. And if this barbarous treatment of pretended heretics, be evidently repugnant to the true spirit of christianity, and contrary to the example of our saviour, which we are bound to imitate; if it is entirely opposite to the principles and practices of the primitive and purest ages of the church; this will be I hope sufficient

to convince wise men, that the religion which commands these cruelties and inhumanities, cannot derive itself from him, who is “the God of love, and patience, and mercy, and pity to the sons of men.”

I shall begin with giving a few instances of the decrees and decisions of the church of *Rome* in her general councils. The third and fourth general council of *Lateran*, and the third of *Constance*, decree, “that the goods of heretics, if they be laymen, shall be confiscated. That heretics shall be imprisoned, and kept in close custody, by putting them into fetters and iron chains, till the church hath passed sentence on them; and enjoins all secular magistrates, to expel and exterminate all heretics out of their dominions, and under anathema, forbids them to let an heretic continue within their houses, or territories;” verifying the words of our saviour, “they shall throw you into prison, and cast out your names as evil doers for my sake.”

Though our lord declares, “he came not to destroy mens lives, but to save them;” and that *St. Austin* saith, “that no good man in the catholic church allowed the punishment of heretics with death;” yet they will not suffer those whom they stile heretics to live. By the constitutions of *Frederick II* it is decreed, that “all heretics shall be duly punished by the secular judge, they shall take them away by a damnable death.” So also saith the canon law. By the statute of *Henry IV.* against the *Lollards*, after sentence pronounced against these heretics, the sheriff or other civil officers, who were required to be present at the execution, must take them into their custody and burn them before the people, in some eminent place; and to encourage their host of men to destroy, exterminate and butcher those whom they call heretics,

heretics, they promise them full remission of their sins which they confess, and for which they have been contrite, and a greater degree of everlasting happiness than others may expect. Thus may the papists go to heaven, by sending others to the pit of hell, and get the pardon of their sins, not by the blood of Christ shed for them, but by shedding of the blood of christians.

And agreeable to these barbarous and cruel determinations, hath been the constant and avowed practice of the church of *Rome* from the eleventh century to this time, whenever they had power in their hands; and this they did under colour and pretence of justice. “ In the Low Countries, saith *Grotius*, an hundred thousand men and women suffered thus, before one sword was drawn against the then *Spanish* government.” The jesuits, saith *Baldwin*, “ had not continued thirty years in being, before near ninety thousand protestants were killed in *England, Spain, France, Italy*, and the Low Countries.” Their own *Vergenus* confesseth, that in the space of thirty years, their inquisition had consumed by various kinds of tortures an hundred and fifty thousand christians; and our own *Saunders* doth confess, that the number of *Lollards*, and the *sacramentarians*, which were committed to the flames, were infinite. And *Innocent III.* in the space of a few months, caused above an hundred thousand of the *Albigenses* to be barbarously murdered. Judge then, if it be not truly said of this great *Babylon*, “ that she was drunken with the blood of the saints, and of the martyrs of Christ Jesus*,” and if this be not “ the beast which causeth all that would not worship her to be destroyed; in whom will at last be found, the blood of the saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth in these last ages, for the sake of Christ.”

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* Rev. 17. 6. 13, 15, 18, 24.

And where they had not power thus to act by colour or pretence of law, because the government was of a contrary religion, or but weakly for them, they have too often done it by private murders, public assassinations, and open rebellions. Two *French* kings *Henry III.* and *IV.* though *Roman Catholics*, were both stabbed for their remissness in shedding the blood of protestants. Who has not heard of the massacre in *France*, in which an hundred thousand protestants were slain in *Paris*? And of the like massacre in *Ireland*, which consumed above two hundred thousand protestants; and of the intended villany in *England* by the gunpowder-plot, no less than the murdering of the whole kingdom in its representatives; the blowing up a whole parliament, king, lords and commons in a moment, before they could perceive the least danger. And that their whole church allows these devilish practices, appears from hence, that we do not find they are ever publicly disapproved or condemned by the church of *Rome*; no, she rejoiceth in, and rewards the doing of them. The news of the massacre at *Paris* was received at *Rome* with great joy, and giving thanks to God, as if he had been the author of that wickedness. Indeed, they think, that by such barbarities and cruelties they do God service, this is evident from their own words. The fourth *Lateran* council saith, that "this they must do, that they may be deemed good christians." And that these doctrines and decrees are manifestly repugnant to the laws of Christ, and to the doctrine of the primitive church, tho' very agreeable to the practices of the church of *Rome*, is the next point I shall endeavour to prove.

And this I shall do first by considering the words of our blessed Lord, in answer to the fiery zeal of *John* and *James* against the *Samaritans*, who were really schismatics and heretics; when those who are
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thus persecuted by the church of *Rome* are falsely supposed to be such.

For in opposition to the temple of *Jerusalem* which God himself had appointed for the place of his worship, commanding all men to repair to it for that purpose; the *Samaritans* erected a temple upon mount *Gerizim*, where they worshipped, deserting the temple of *Jerusalem*. This was their schism. And as of old they were idolaters, for they feared the Lord and served their own Gods*; so when our Saviour spake these words, they erred in matters which concerned their salvation, and were therefore heretics; "ye worship ye know not what; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the *Jews* †." It should also be observed, that the papists exercise these cruelties on them whom they call schismatics and heretics, chiefly for their refusing to receive and own the pope or bishop of *Rome*, as Christ's vicar, who is a manifest usurper of that title; but that these *Samaritans*, refused to receive our Saviour himself in his own person, and that because of his seeming to go to *Jerusalem* to worship, so that the honour of God, of religion, and of *Jerusalem*, the place of his peculiar worship, were all concerned in this case of the *Samaritans*.

It is farther to be remarked, that the permission of what was here desired by St. *John* and *James*, would have been more effectual, for the conviction of the heretical, schismatical *Samaritans*, than any of the punishments inflicted by the inquisition, or any arts of papal tyranny can be for the conviction of those whom they call heretics and schismatics; for these disciples did not want themselves to execute this sentence on the *Samaritans*, by committing them to the flames, or imploring the magistrate's assistance to consume or burn them: But they only desired leave to call upon the God of

P 3

heaven.

* 2 Kings 17. 33. † John 4. 22.

heaven, to rain down fire upon them to consume them, which had it pleased him so to have done, the rest of the *Samaritans* would have been evidently convinced by demonstration from heaven of God's displeasure against their way of worship, and of the truth of the *Messiah* and of his doctrine, who procured this vengeance to be executed upon them; whereas the persecutions of the church of *Rome* minister no conviction to the conscience, but only tend to harden men's hearts, and imbitter their spirits against those who use them, and to induce them the more firmly to believe, that such a barbarous cruel religion cannot be of God.

From these observations it is evident, that all the church of *Rome* can plead, to justify her practice in burning, massacring, extirpating of heretics and schismatics, might with much greater advantage have been urged against the *Samaritans*. Doth not she practise her severities out of zeal for truth, and for the honour of God, of Christ, and of the true religion, in reclaiming heretics and schismatics, and to prevent or terrify others from adhering to, or being deluded by them? But how contrary is this to our Saviour's conduct, who when the disciples upon all these accounts, had much greater cause to call for fire from heaven on these *Samaritans*, did yet rebuke them, and would not suffer it to be done, not even to one small village? How then will he condemn the actual execution of such severities to many thousand innocent christians, after his solemn declaration, that all such cruel proceedings are directly contrary to the design of his most blessed coming upon earth, and to the spirit of his gospel?

For the true reasons of Christ's rebuking his disciples, for their desiring leave to act thus severely with these schismatical and heretical *Samaritans*, were, first, because this spirit of severity, where-
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ever found, is entirely opposite to the calm temper of christianity; this appears by our saviour's reply to his disciples, *ye know not what spirit ye are of*; that is, you do not consider, under what kind of dispensation ye are placed by me. The temper, disposition, and affection, which I come to teach men, and would fix within them, is not a furious persecuting, and destructive spirit, but such as is mild, gentle, and tender of the lives and interests of men, even of our greatest enemies. Under the old testament, if a prophet was rejected and scoffed at, he had power to punish it severely, and "to call for fire from heaven, to devour them presently, and curse them in the name of the Lord*": But they who reject and crucify Christ, are prayed for by him, and are by his command, to be preached to, and if possible to be brought to repentance, and all christians are to conform themselves to this example, towards the contemners of their persons, or rejectors of their doctrine, not according to the legal, but the evangelical dispensation, the meekness and gentleness of Christ. The gospel dispensation requires universal love, meekness, peace and goodwill to all men, even to our enemies; and no difference of religion, no pretence of zeal for God, can justify this fierce, cruel and inhuman zeal. Another reason of our saviour's against those wicked doctrines and practices, is, "that he came not into the world, to destroy men's temporal lives, but to save them." He came to discountenance all rage, violence, and cruelty in men, one towards another; to restrain and subdue that furious unpeaceable spirit, which so disquiets the world, and occasions so many mischiefs and disorders in it; that the lamb and wolf may lie down together, without hurting or destroying one another; and engaging all men to lay aside all bitterness and wrath,

* 2 Kings 2. 24.

anger and clamour, malice and evil speaking. He came to introduce that excellent religion, which consults not only the eternal salvation of men's souls, but also their temporal peace and security, their comfort and happiness in this world; *condemning all bitter zeal, as earthly, sensual and devilish.* Not dispatching them out of the way, as papists do, but "with long suffering, expecting, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth;" which teacheth us, "to bear with the weak in faith, and belong-suffering to all men, and to restore them in the spirit of meekness." And these reasons equally concern both magistrates and ministers, as well such who persecute out of misguided zeal towards God, as those who do it out of envy, hatred, and carnal principles. Hence it also plainly appears, that no one should be persecuted, purely for his mistaking, or even denying any article of faith revealed by the gospel; but only for seditious and treasonable doctrines, or for propagating and divulging of errors, pernicious to, and destructive of the civil peace.

But against this barbarous behaviour towards our fellow christians, let us consider the example of our blessed saviour and his apostles. And what can be pretended for the exercise of this severity by papists, which might not with much greater reason have been urged against the scribes and pharisees, who so vigorously opposed the propagation of the gospel? What can be said for doing this by human power, which could not have been more plausibly insisted on for doing it, by a power divine? If it be urged, that the scribes and pharisees did ignorantly oppose the gospel, and therefore by our Lord's example, are to be forgiven; that they were objects of God's mercy, because they and St. Paul did it ignorantly in unbelief. No doubt their ignorance was

was as gross, as what the papists can reasonably object to us hereticks ; and therefore the example of our saviour's prayer, *father, forgive them they know not what they do*, and God's mercy to St. Paul, more strongly plead for mercy towards protestants, whom without mercy they destroy. Were not those blind guides who led their followers into the pit, and would neither themselves enter into the kingdom of God, nor suffer other men to enter, as fit objects of our Lord's displeasure, as *Hus*, and *Jerom* of *Prague*, *Granmer*, *Latimer* and *Ridley*, could be of that of the church of *Rome*? Would not the inflicting of death from heaven upon those violent opposers of the truth, have been as likely to convert the *Jew*, or terrify the enemies of the gospel, as is the burning, massacring, and tormenting of protestants, called heretics, in order to hinder and prevent their supposed heresies? Could not our Lord as well have called for his twelve legions of angels, to destroy the scribes and pharisees, as his pretended vicar the pope, by his crusadoes to extirpate protestant heretics? Nay, our saviour could more plausibly have pleaded zeal for God and religion in his case, than the church of *Rome* can in hers. But our Lord intending that his religion should not be propagated by human means, and that men should be drawn to the profession of it, by the bands of love, by the gentle and peaceable methods of reason and persuasion, gave no example of a furious zeal and religious rage, against those who despised his doctrine. The author of this institution compelled no one to it by temporal punishments ; he only said, " if any man will be my disciple ; if any man will come after me." And when his disciples were forsaking him, he does not set up an inquisition to torture and punish them, he only says, *will ye also go away?*

Let us next consider the example and behaviour of the apostles; for in their days the heretics were as pernicious, the false prophets and deceivers as dangerous and fit to be cut off, as were the heretics, who have suffered by the church of *Rome*. Our Saviour foretold, “that they would deceive many, and even if possible, the very elect; St. *Paul*, that grievous wolves should enter into the church, not sparing the flock; St. *Peter*, that there should be false prophets among them, who should bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them; and that such by good words and fair speeches would deceive the hearts of the simple, and so bewitch them that they should not obey the truth.” But though our Lord’s disciples could have confounded all these heretics, false prophets and deceivers, and by a word have sentenced them to death, as *Peter* did *Ananias* and *Saphira*, had they conceived this method of proceeding suitable to the mind of God, the rules of their profession, and tending to the edification of the church; for they were furnished with a power of miracles, and of casting down every thing that exalted itself against the knowledge of Christ, and to revenge all disobedience against him. And yet we do not find, that they ever used their power to inflict death upon the heretic or deceiver. Besides, as the apostles knew by the spirit, that the christian faith would in a short time prevail, and have the favour and protection of the civil magistrate, they would surely, had they thought it necessary, have left them some directions how to deal with heretics, agreeably to the decrees of *Roman* councils; for we cannot suppose, that they wanted either zeal for that religion, which they promoted with the loss of life, and all things desirable in this world, or wisdom to know the best method of promoting and preserving that religion which they had preached to mankind. No, the apostles

apostles did shew their utmost care and zeal for securing the church from the pernicious doctrines and delusions of these false teachers, by all proper means, except that of persecution.

In their epistles, they frequently exhort christians, “to stand fast in faith. To hold fast the profession of faith without wavering. To hold fast the form of sound words. To be steadfast in our most holy faith.” And that because of certain men crept in among them, who turned the grace of God into lasciviousness. They gave christians notice of these false teachers and deceivers, in order for them to avoid and beware of their delusions. Our saviour saith, “beware of false prophets, by their works ye shall know them. And St. Paul, mark and avoid them who cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which ye have received; beware of dogs and of evil workers, turn from them, lest being led away by the error of the wicked, you fall from your own steadfastness.” They also exhort the rulers of the church, “to take heed to their flock, and to be watchful to preserve them from these wolves.” Indeed, they sometimes did deliver up to satan, those who made shipwreck of, and overthrew the faith of some, as in the case of *Hymeneus* and *Alexander**. They were ready to revenge the disobedience of the seducers of the church of *Corinth*†. They wished them out who troubled the church, as in the case of the *Galatians*; and that God would reward them according to their works, as in the case of *Alexander*||.

But the proceedings of the church of *Rome*, instead of producing any good effects, tend to harden persons in their supposed heresy, and shew that the church of *Rome* distrusts the merit of that cause, which cannot be maintained by any other arguments,

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* 1 Tim. 1. 19, 20. † 2 Cor. 10. 6. || Gal. 5. 12. 2 Tim 4. 14.

ments, than fire and faggot, swords and inquisitions. That therefore the apostles declined this method of proceeding, that they gave no instructions to future ages to deal with heretics in such a cruel bloody manner, is a convincing demonstration, that they judged such actions to be contrary to christianity, and the doctrine which they preached. And truly, if christianity can be contradicted, it is most apparently done by those men, who instead of shewing mercy to all men, though foolish and deceived, do by inhuman cruelties and persecutions, by barbarous inquisitions, bloody massacres, endeavour to extirpate all that differ from them; who instead of instructing in meekness those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth, think to convert them with fire and faggot, and so render their repentance impossible; who instead of chastising the flesh, that the soul may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus, and endeavouring to recover them out of the snare of satan, do all they can to put them into his hands; the council of *Constance* not being ashamed to say at the condemnation of an heretic, "now we commit thy body to the flames, and thy soul to the devil."

The reasons against this treatment of heretics, are so cogently expressed, by our excellent bishop *Taylor*, that I cannot omit the following passage.

"It is, says he*, one of the glories of christianity, that it came in upon the world with no other force, but that of reason and demonstration of the spirit; that towards the persons of men, it was always full of meekness, charity, compliance, toleration, condescension and forbearance, restoring persons overtaken with an error, in the spirit of meekness. Things are best preserved by that which gives them their first being, and best agrees with their

their temper and constitution. And it would be a mighty disparagement to so glorious an institution, that in its principle, it should be merciful and humane, and in the propagation of it so inhuman; and it would be unprofitable and unreasonable, that the sword should be used in the persuasion of one proposition, and nothing like it in the persuasion of the whole. To do so may serve the end of a temporal prince, but can never promote the honour of Christ's kingdom." And this bloody persecuting temper is not only contrary to scripture, flatly contradicts the principles and practice of the ancient church, and of the primitive professors of the christian faith; but it is also repugnant to many principles which then obtained among christians. For instance,

It was a principle which generally obtained among christians till the days of *Constantine*, and was afterwards maintained by many fathers of the church, that men were to be left to their freedom in matters of religion, and not be compelled by outward punishments to the profession of it; that religion cannot consist with force, or justice be joined with cruelty; and that it is an indecent unworthy thing, to call in the secular arm for the punishment of errors in religion, or of affronts offered by them to the deity." *St. Hillary* says, "that they who do this, are not the bishops of Christ, but the servants of antichrist." *Athanasius* says, "this is to act like the devil, and unlike our saviour, who never used force, but persuasion only; for the truth must not be taught by swords and weapons and soldiers, but by persuasion only." It is the property of true religion, not to compel but to persuade. Our Lord offered not violence to any one, he said to all, "if any man will come after me;" and to his disciples, "will ye also go away." They likewise generally taught, that the tares sown by the devil
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among the good wheat, were not to be rooted up until the harvest ; that is, the end of the world, lest by so doing, they should also root up the good seed.

Let then our adversaries judge, whether these principles can be consistent with the doctrines of their general councils, or with their burning or destroying all whom they call heretics, and obliging christian magistrates so to do ? Whether these fathers do not expressly condemn such proceedings against heretics, as inconsistent with religion and justice, opposite to the episcopal doctrine ; and as being ridiculous, absurd, and matter of just lamentation ? Whether they do not say, that by their exercising such severities, they act not like Christ's bishops, but the servants of antichrist ? So that from what hath been observed, we may sensibly discover one notorious falshood of the *Romish* religion. For if this barbarous treatment of supposed heretics or schismatics, be evidently repugnant to the true spirit of christianity ; if it be contrary to the example of our saviour, which we ought to imitate ; if it be directly opposite to the principles and practices of the purest ages of the church, as hath been fully evinced ; this will I hope sufficiently convince wise men, that a religion, which commands such cruelties and inhumanities, cannot derive itself from him who is the God of love and patience, of mercy and pity to the sons of men ; nor from that Jesus, who came into the world not to *destroy men's lives, but to save them.*

And if we duly consider these savage principles and destructive practices of the abettors of this most barbarous religion, it must surely quicken our endeavours for the preservation of the true religion, by our most serious reformation of our evil ways, and most importunate addresses to the throne of grace. If papists can pray for the success of their
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wicked and diabolical schemes, shall not we be as solicitous in our addresses to that God, who hath mercifully preserved us hitherto, and will we hope still preserve us from the blood-thirsty rage of these our enemies? And being thus defended by his gracious providence, let us serve him without fear, in righteousness and holiness all the days of our lives. Let us cleave unto him with a perfect heart, lest being provoked by our crying sins, he should say unto us as he did to the people of *Israel**, “ye have forsaken me, wherefore I will deliver you no more.”

But if providence should ever give us up into the hands of these cruel men; we shall then stand in need of the most perfect patience, undaunted courage, unshaken faith, and stedfast resolutions to undergo the fiery trial to which we shall be then exposed; there being nothing more inconsistent with the avowed principles of popery, nothing more contrary to the constant practice of that church, and to the oaths and obligations of its members, than to permit heretics to escape the sad and direful effects of their inhuman cruelties.

And let us return to our good God the utmost praises and thanksgivings of our hearts and mouths, for the inestimable blessing of our most excellent religion, for the wonderful preservation of it to this time, and for all other his great and manifold deliverances, which he in mercy hath vouchsafed to this nation. To him who hath done such great things for us, who hath so wonderfully delivered his servants, and who we trust will still deliver us, be ascribed all wisdom, power, goodness, glory and praise, world without end. *Amen.*

* Judg. 10. 13.

DISCOURSE XXIII. *Stillington.*

The reformation justified.

Acts 24. 14.

After the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and the prophets.

IN the beginning of this chapter, we find St. Paul brought to his trial before *Felix* the Roman governor, and that *Tertullus*, a most eloquent orator, was appointed to manage the accusation against the apostle; whom he charges with being a pestilent and seditious fellow, a disturber of the nation in all parts, a prophaner of the temple, and which was worse than all, “ he was a ringleader of the sect of the *Nazarenes*; a name given the christians by the *Jews*, because of our saviour’s abode in the town of *Nazareth*. From St. Paul’s answer, we may easily suppose it was represented to *Felix*;

“ That when the *Jewish* church had been at first established by God himself, subject to laws of his own making, and that “ the priests lips were to preserve knowledge, and the law to be sought at their mouths *.” That when under this government, their religion had been long preserved, and they had enjoyed one common public worship among them; and that though there were several sects, such as the *Pharisees* and *Essenes*, yet all agreed in the same divine worship; but that at last, there appears one *Jesus* of *Nazareth*, a person of obscure parentage and mean education, who

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* Mal. 2. 7.

pretending to discover many corruptions in the doctrine and practice of our best men, had without any authority from the high priest or *Sanhedrin*, gathered great multitudes of people after him, till the wisdom of our governor thought fit to take him off, and make him an example for other reformers. But that notwithstanding his disciples after his death, had formed themselves into a sect, whose pretences and designs were equally dangerous, and if not restrained, must end in the ruin of our ancient *Jewish catholic church*; which hath had so constant and visible succession in all ages, so many martyrs and confessors, so many devout and religious persons, as the *Pharisees* are; so excellent an order and government, and so much unity and peace, before this new sect of *Nazarenes* arose in opposition to that authority, with which God had invested the high priest and rulers of the people; and among all the promoters of this new sect, none is more busy and factious, than this *Paul* whom we here accuse, who was “found in the temple profaning it,” and whom we would have taken and destroyed, but he was violently rescued out of our hands, and sent here to be tried; and what I have said is the sense of many witnesses. For the *Jews* “also assented, and said, that these things were so.”

St. *Paul* being thus accused, and having leave to answer for himself, was so far from being daunted by his powerful enemies, or the vehemency of their accusation, that he tells the governor, he will undertake his own defence *with all cheerfulness*. As to his tumultuous and profane carriage in the temple, of which he was accused, this he utterly denies, and says, they can never prove it against him. But as to the main part of the charge, his being “a ringleader of the sect of the *Nazarenes*,” this he owns with the greatest freedom and courage,
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in the presence of his judge and accusers ; and defends himself by saying, that he had done nothing contrary to the laws of God, or the most ancient religion of his country ; “ but this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and the prophets.”

From these words we may infer, the imputation which christianity suffered under, at its first appearance ; “ after the way, which they call heresy ;” which false imputation St. *Paul* removed by appeal to scripture and antiquity ; “ so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things that are written in the law and the prophets.” St. *Paul*’s courage appears in so freely owning his religion in the presence of his greatest enemies, who were in hopes to destroy him. “ This I confess unto thee, that after the way, &c.” The *Jews* charge here against the christians implies in it an accusation of novelty and singularity, of faction and sedition.

A sect or heresy, meaning *novelty*, implies in it, mens setting up some new doctrine not heard of before, and making that the foundation of separating from the established church ; which they must charge with errors and corruptions, or they become guilty of schism, by an unnecessary separation. The imputation therefore which the *Jews* laid on the *Nazarenes*, or *Christians*, was, that they could not shew a visible succession in all ages, nor yet prove the *Jewish* church to be guilty of such errors and corruptions, as to need a reformation.

For where say they, “ were the men to be found in former ages, that taxed the *Jewish* church with such errors and corruptions, as *Jesus* of *Nazareth* did ? That bid men beware of the leaven of the scribes and pharisees, their most learned and holy

holy men? Had not God always a visible church among them? They could produce the names of their high-priests in every age, and shew them all the marks of a visible church? For “in *Judah* was God known, and his name was great in *Israel*. Hath not God said, that in his house at *Jerusalem*, he would put his name for ever; and his eyes and his heart, should be there perpetually?” So that there must be a constant and visible succession in all ages. But if what the christians pretend be true, God must for several ages have wanted a church amongst them. For the things which they charged the *Jews* with, were not newly crept in, but had been delivered down to them, by the tradition of their forefathers, from the very time of *Moses*, as they thought. By this rule they guided themselves in their actions of religion, and in the sense of obscure places of the law and prophets; nor were they ever charged with such corruptions as *Jesus* of *Nazareth* and his disciples did. Would God ever suffer such dangerous errors, hypocrisy, and superstitions to prevail in his own church, and raise up no persons to discover them, till these new teachers and reformers appeared? Might not we say, that not only the teachers, but God himself had slept all that time, if he raised up none to detect such errors and corruptions? Where had God then any true church in the world, if not among his people of the *Jews*? And even christians themselves own, that we were once the chosen and beloved of God, that they receive the law and the prophets from our hands? That “to us were committed the oracles of God, and to us pertained the adoption, and the glory and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God and the promises, and that ours are the fathers*.” After all these privileges how can we possibly suppose this church

* *Rom.* 3. 2. 9. 4, 5.

church to fall into such a degeneracy, as to be at last cast off by God, and a new church to arise out of its ashes ?” Thus we may reasonably imagine the *Jews* to have argued for themselves. But

They yet further trampled on and despised this new sect of *Nazarenes*, insinuating, that “ they had nothing of the pomp and splendour of their church ; the disciples of their master were only poor fishermen, inconsiderable, mean and illiterate persons, of no authority or reputation for learning or piety ; even their master himself, did not retire from the world, to lead an abstracted life, but conversed with publicans and sinners, and did not require his disciples to fast and make long prayers ; whereas the Pharisees were men of great authority and mortification, much exercised in long and frequent prayers. And how can we possibly think that such devout persons as these are, could be mistaken, and the *Nazarenes* only in the right ? Besides, where was their church before *Jesus of Nazareth* ? We can produce a personal succession on our side, that joined in constant communion with us at *Jerusalem* ; but let the christians shew any number of men before themselves, that believed what they do, and rejected the abuses which they charge us with. If they cannot do this, the imputation of novelty justly belongs to them. Again, if so great alterations have happened in our church, that there is a necessity of reforming it ; name us the persons, time, place, and manner how all these corruptions came in ; when did men first forsake the letter of the scripture, and adhere to *tradition* ? Who first brought in the *Pharisaical* superstitions ? Could one generation conspire to deceive the next ? If not, how could such changes happen in religion, and no one discover, or prevent its infecting posterity ? Why did not *Jesus of Nazareth*, who so vehemently declaimed against the

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hypocrisy, superstitions and false doctrines of the *Pharisees*, shew, when, where, and how these things came into the church of God?" Thus the *Jews* believed themselves to be the only true, ancient, visible, catholic, and infallible church of God; and despised the poor christians, as a novel upstart sect of *Nazarenes*; which was one of the unjust imputations the first christians suffered under. Indeed, they also were accused of being factious and seditious; and this for not submitting, as was pretended, to the church's authority; and for disturbing the peace and quiet of the people. But

Our Lord's disciples, so far from breaking with the *Jews* in affairs meerly of order and indifference, from a principle of humour or fancy; that on the contrary, we find them extremely cautious of giving any offence in such things; which temper they learnt of their lord and master, who complied with many things, because they should not be contemned by others. Thus was he baptised of *John*, but not to wash away any sin. Thus he went up at the solemn feasts to *Jerusalem*, and drove the buyers and sellers out of the temple; and the apostles, after the Holy Ghost was poured upon them, attended the temple at the hours of prayers; and even St. *Paul* submits himself to a legal purification in the temple for seven days. But notwithstanding all this care of the first christians, they could not avoid the imputation of faction, because they would not entirely submit their judgments to the *Jewish* church. For they insisted, that as they were governors of a church by God's own institution, that they only were to explain the law and the prophets. For how should poor ignorant people understand prophecies, and know when the true *messiah* should appear? Are they fit to judge of such matters! No, they must believe as the church believes. Have any of the

the rulers, or pharisees believed on him? But this people, which know not the law, are cursed *; that is, for setting up their own judgment in opposition to the church's authority. And the first question asked of *Peter* and *John*, when summoned before the council was, "by what power, or by what name have ye done this?" But they never enquired whether their miracles, or whether their doctrines were true.

Thus they charged the christians with faction, for being so active to promote christianity, to the great disturbance of the *Jews* in all parts. *St. Paul* was accused of being "a mover of sedition among all the *Jews*, throughout the world;" and they charged the christians with having "turned the world upside down †." This they knew was a most effectual method to render them odious to their governors; who had much rather the people should continue quiet under an old error, than have the peace disturbed for the greatest truth. This was indeed a great difficulty in the way of christianity; people were possessed before-hand with quite other apprehensions of religion, than the christians brought among them. The *Jewish* and *Pagan* religions were settled in all places, and the people at ease in the practice of them. What then must the christians do? Must they let them alone, and not endeavour to convince them of the truth of their own doctrine? If so, they are unfaithful to their trust, betrayers of truth, and false to the souls of men; and if they attempt to persuade men from their religion, such is the fondness that most have for their own opinions, especially in religious concerns, that where they might hope to convince one, they might be sure to enrage many; particularly those, whose interest it was to support the old religion. For how little doth reason

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* John 7. 46 to 49. † Acts 17. 6.

signify with most men, where interest is against it? This was the case of these great men of the *Jews* who accused *Paul*. They easily saw the tendency of this new religion, if it prevailed; for then farewell to all the pomp and splendour of the high priesthood; farewell to the glory of the temple and city, where all the tribes came to worship thrice a year; farewell to all the riches, ease and pleasure that they enjoyed; and what was the greatest truth and best religion in the world to them, in comparison with these? All which were sufficient reasons to them, to accuse truth itself of deceiving others, and the most peaceable men, of designing to promote faction and sedition. I now proceed to consider the method *St. Paul* took to remove these false imputations; which was by an appeal to scripture, as the ground and rule of his faith; and to antiquity, as to the object of worship; not bringing in any new religion, but restoring the old to its primitive purity.

The *Jews* pleaded possession, tradition, authority of the present church; against all these *St. Paul* fixes upon a certain and unmoveable foundation, *the law and the prophets*, a common rule that was allowed on both sides. But the great question is, why *St. Paul* should decline the *authority* of the then *church*, since God had himself appointed the priests to be the interpreters of the law, and to determine the sense of scripture? My answer to this is, that the apostle had very great reason so to do, and to appeal only to scripture, because the authority of the church was more liable to error, partiality and mistake, than the rule of scripture was. Both sides agreed, that the law was from God, and that the prophets spake by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. The only difficulty was to find out their true meaning, and to compare prophecies with events. Thus if the circumstances

stances foretold by the prophets, had their exact accomplishment in Christ, as might easily appear to any who carefully compare them; then, tho' the ordinary judgment concerning true prophets belonged to the *Sanhedrin*, yet it was more reasonable to believe they were mistaken, than that all the prophecies should be accomplished in one, who was not the true *messiah*. For those prophecies were as much intended for the people to judge of the accomplishment of them, as for the priests and rulers; otherwise, when the authority of the *Jewish* church condemned our saviour, the people ought not to have believed him to be the *messiah*, if they were obliged to submit their judgment, as to the sense of scripture, wholly to the church's authority. The sense of scripture then may be so evident to private capacities, as for them not to submit to the authority of any church. For notwithstanding the promises made to the *Jewish* church, and the power of their priests and rulers, men were bound to believe directly contrary to the authority of that church, in a matter of the highest moment, even in that concerning the true *messiah*. The people were required to believe Christ to be the *messiah*, though the high-priests and elders had condemned him for a deceiver and malefactor; and there are many other cases, wherein men may lawfully reject the authority of any church: as when they attempt to overthrow what is antecedent to the belief of any authority; such as the common sense of mankind; the force of a divine law; the liberty of judgment concerning truth and falsehood; all which must necessarily be allowed prior to the authority of any church.

If then any church demands things contrary to common sense to be believed, as that the right hand is the left, or the left the right; or that one and the same body can be in a thousand places at once;

once; or, if it demands things contrary to the force and reason of a divine law: even this the *Jews* would have acknowledged, had any authority among them left out the second commandment, or permitted religious worship to be given to images, under any distinctions; or had the priests taken from the people their share in the sacrifices, under pretence of the unsanctified teeth, or long beards of the laity, as not fit to touch the sacrifices offered to God; I say, whoever requires such things to be believed, their authority ought to be rejected: and therefore, when our saviour bids his disciples to “observe and do whatsoever the scribes and pharisees bid them; it must be supposed in things agreeable to the letter and reason of the law, or he would not have bid them “beware of their doctrine:” or lastly, if church authority takes away all liberty of judgment concerning truth and falshood in religion. For every man hath a natural right to judge for himself; and whoever takes this away, they may as well put out mens eyes, that they may better follow their guides. Because it is an assault upon our understanding, robbing us of the greatest talent God hath committed to our management, and depriving us of the use of our best faculties. I would not be mistaken, it is the liberty of judgment I plead for, and not of practice; which may be justly restrained by the laws of the church, where the other is allowed; because the obligations to peace and unity are very different from those to faith and inward assent.

And as *St. Paul* had great reason to appeal from the high priests and elders “to the law and the prophets,” because the former were subject to error and mistake; so likewise, because “the law and the prophets” are less liable to partiality, than a living judge, or any church authority. This evidently appears in the present case, between the high priest

and elders, and St. *Paul*. The former insisted, that it belonged to them to determine the sense of the law; but the apostle declines their judgment, and appeals only to the "law and the prophets." I suppose none, who would have controversies in religion decided by a living judge, will say, they should be determined right or wrong; and if it be expected on the side of truth, assurance ought to be given, that such judges shall lay aside all partiality and prejudice, and diligently search, examine and weigh the evidence on both sides, and then determine according to the true sense of the law. And how little probable this is to be done, will appear by the living judges in our saviour's time; for was there ever greater partiality, more obstinate prejudice, or more wilful errors seen in any persons, or a more malicious sentence, than what they passed on our lord and saviour? They would not believe his miracles to come from God, but attributed them to the devil. They would not enquire the true place of his nativity, but run on in a wilful mistake, that he was born in *Galilee*; when had they properly searched, they would have found that Christ was born in *Bethlehem*. They on all occasions lay in wait, to entrap our Saviour with questions, to pervert his words, and draw blasphemy from his most innocent expressions; and when this would not succeed, they used all the arts of fraud, malice and injustice, to punish our lord as a malefactor and blasphemer; well therefore might St. *Paul* decline their judgment, and appeal to the law and the prophets, for the ground and rule of his faith. And as for the object of the apostle's worship, he appeals to the best antiquity, "I worship the God of my fathers." Thus St. *Peter* saith, "the God of *Abraham*, of *Isaac*, and of *Jacob*, the God of our fathers hath glorified his son *Jesus*; and the God of our fathers raised up *Jesus*."

sus*," Hence declaring, that they did not intend to introduce any new religion, contrary to what God had discovered to the patriarchs; which was what the *Jews* objected to them. Thus did *St. Paul* vindicate christianity from being a new sect or heresy, by an appeal to scripture, and the best antiquity.

I shall now briefly observe, the apostle's freedom and courage in owning his religion, thus falsely accused. "But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which is called heresy, &c." He abhorred the mean and base principle of some men, who deny their religion when it brings them into danger; for he declined not to appear, though to the hazard of his life, in so just a cause. He valued his religion beyond his own safety, and regarded not the reproaches of his enemies, so long as he made it his constant exercise, "to keep a conscience void of offence, both towards God, and towards men. For saith he, our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity, and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world†." We see in *St. Paul* a great instance of true christian magnanimity. He knew both the malice and quality of his enemies, and that he was to answer before a judge, who regarded neither justice, nor religion; yet he neither flatters his judge, betrays any distrust of him, nor fear of his enemies; but with a modest freedom and manly courage owns the main part of their accusation, and effectually vindicates his own innocence and religion together. I shall now make some application of what has been said, to our own state and condition.

Thanks be to God we enjoy the liberty, not only of speaking for, but of professing and owning our

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* Acts 3. 13. 5. 30. † 2 Cor. 1. 12.

religion; and may we ever do so. But we have busy and restless adversaries, the factors of the high-priest and elders at *Rome*, who bear as much malice to us, as did ever those of *Jerusalem* towards *St. Paul*. And they have their *Tertullus's* too, men of art and insinuation, who manage their cause against us, just as he did against *St. Paul*; charging us with bringing in new sects, under pretence of reformation, and with rejecting the authority of their church, thereby to introduce faction and schism. These are heavy charges, but no other, than what the high-priest and elders brought against *St. Paul*; and happy for us, his defence and vindication is ours too, for we also can appeal to scripture, to the best and purest antiquity; and desire to be judged thereby. For as the same reasons which the papists produce against the reformation, would have held against the spreading of christianity at first; so the same defence which *St. Paul* made for christianity, will justify our reformation now; and therefore we have all reason to imitate his courage, in owning and defending our religion, from the imputation cast upon it. For

What have all the clamours of our adversaries for above two hundred years past amounted to, but the very same which the *Jews* objected against christianity, viz. *novelty* and *faction*. "Where, say they, was your church before the reformation? Produce your succession in all ages of persons, who agreed in all things with you. Where were those distinct bodies of men, who complained of those corruptions, you pretend to reform? Our church hath had a constant glorious succession of bishops, martyrs, confessors, and religious orders of men, virgins and widows; shew us how it was possible for so many errors and corruptions to come into the church without being discovered? Where was the watchful eye all this while over the church? What

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all the pastors asleep, or conspiring together to deceive their posterity ! Besides, how can protestants answer their rejecting the authority of a church, to whom God had promised his infallible spirit ? How can they clear themselves from faction and disturbing the peace of the world ?" These are the chief of their objections against the *reformation*, the very same as we have seen the *Jews* had to produce against christianity. If the arguments are good now, they were so then; and if so, the high-priest and elders were in the right, and *St. Paul* in the wrong: if they were not good then, but are now, it must be, either because the christian church hath greater infallibility promised than the *Jewish* had ; or that the first christians had greater reason to reject the authority of that church, than our reformers had, as to the church of *Rome* ; or that the causes of corruptions in the *Jewish* church could not hold in the christian. If none of these appear, the two cases are very similar.

But it cannot be proved, that the christian church hath greater infallibility promised, than the *Jewish* had ; for this plain reason, because, that one of the strongest arguments produced for the infallibility of the christian church, is taken from the promises made to the *Jewish* in *Deut.* 17. 8, 9, 10. Had the papists any better proof for this in the new testament, they would not have recourse to the *Jewish* constitution. Where hath God promised to dwell in *St. Peter's* at *Rome*, as he did in his temple at *Jerusalem* ? How would they triumph, could they find such words in the gospel concerning *Rome*, as these about *Jerusalem* ; " that God had sanctified it, that his name might be there forever, and his eyes, and his heart should be there perpetually *." What trifling proofs in comparison of this, do they produce from the new testament,

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* 2 Chron. 7. 16.

for the authority and infallibility of the *Roman* church? What are all the promises of the spirit made to the apostles, to this of God's particular presence in that place for ever? If *St. Peter* had privileges above the rest of the apostles, how came the intail to be made only to his successors at *Rome*? Why are not the deeds produced, that contain this gift; and yet in the *Jewish* church, where this promise of God's constant presence was made, no such thing as infallibility was implied in it. Again,

It cannot be proved, that the first christians had greater reason to deny the authority of the *Jewish* church, than our reformers had to reject that of the church of *Rome*. How, say the papists! "did not the apostles see the miracles of Christ, and work many themselves, and receive an immediate commission from Christ, in whom the church's infallibility was then seated?" Now admitting this, yet it does not prove the infallibility of that church. Because, upon this principle, they could not believe Christ to be the true *messiah*, which was what depended upon the *fulfilling of prophecies*, and the *truth of his miracles*; but according to the papists, no man could be certain of either of these, without the authority of the church." For the fulfilling of prophecies depended on the sense of many obscure places of scripture, which they say require an infallible judge to interpret; nor could any one determine, whether miracles were true or false, but by the church's authority. If these things be so, how could the first christians believe Christ to be the *messiah*, when in both these they opposed the authority of the *Jewish* church?

Nor can they ever prove, that the same causes of corruption do not equally hold to the christian *Romish* as to the *Jewish* church. For when
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the former introduced the corruptions we charge them with, it was degenerated into greater ignorance, barbarism, luxury, and superstition, than the *Jewish* church, in the time of its darkness, from the ceasing of prophecy to the coming of Christ; even our adversaries confess, that for a long time, they had no learning nor humanity among them; nothing but ease, luxury, and ambition, and all manner of wickedness, so that there was a succession of fifty of their high-priests at *Rome*, who were most remarkable for their extreme wickedness. And the greatest wonder seems to be, that any thing of christianity should be preserved among them.

We can therefore stand upon the same defence that *St. Paul* did. We appeal to scripture, and the purest antiquity. We bring in no new doctrines, and so want no miracles. We only contend for the religion established by Christ, and that which is recorded by the apostles and evangelists; to these we constantly appeal, having the same reason to decline the authority of the *Roman* church, that *St. Paul* had that of the high-priest and elders, when he appealed to the *law and the prophets*; nay, we have much greater reason, because the high-priests and rulers of the people, were appointed of God, but the supremacy of the *Roman* church was a meer usurpation, begun by ambition, advanced by forgery, and defended by cruelty. But we believe all that is written "in the law and the prophets; we worship the God of our fathers; the fathers of the first and purest ages of the christian church." We not only make use of their authority, but desire our adversaries to prove the points in difference between us, by the testimony of the first six hundred years; but this they never have, nor can do.

“ * As to their saying, “ *where was your religion before Luther?*” I would answer this, by asking them one question; after the angel of the church of *Pergamos*, had purged away the corruptions of that church, “ *where was the church of Pergamos?*” *Rev. 2. 12, &c.* Every one of common sense would answer, it was where it is now, and where it ever was, since first a church; for that reformation took away nothing that belonged to the nature or essence of a church, but only the shame and corruption of it. Thus our church before our reformation, when *Luther* appeared, was among ourselves, where the *Roman* corruptions had prevailed, only it was then a corrupted, but now is a reformed church. What makes *Rome* a true church is, that she retains the profession of the creeds, and the administration of the sacraments; what makes her a corrupt church is, that she has added as many more articles of faith, as there were before, and introduced idolatrous practices, into her worship. Such a true church, and such a corrupted church, was this of *England* before the reformation; but we have preserved the truth, and the corruptions we have rejected, and so have added purity to the truth of our christian communion. We have kept what is ancient, removed what was lately introduced, and so are a church built upon the same foundation it was before, only throwing away the *hay and stubble* that was laid upon it. We have acted like good *Hezekiah*, who “ *took away the high places, burnt the images, and cut down the groves,*” which had stood, in all probability four or five hundred years; and with him, we have reformed the old religion, without introducing a new one.”

What then remains but for us to imitate *St. Paul's* courage, in owning and defending our religion,

* *Dr. Claget.*

ligion, notwithstanding all the false imputations thrown upon it. What a shame would it be for us meanly and basely to betray that cause, for which our ancestors sacrificed their lives? Is the *Romish* religion better now than it was formerly? What error in doctrine, or corruption in practice, have they ever reformed? Or, rather, have they not the more established and confirmed them? Are they any thing kinder to us, than they have been? No; and were it in their power, they would condemn us for heretics, and burn us to-morrow; such are the tenderness and bowels of an inquisition. Nor will the mean compliance of going half way to meet them, serve their turn; for not only plain hereticks, but the favourers and suspected of heresy, are solemnly excommunicated every year in the famous bull of *Cæsa Domini*. And *Linwood* tells us, “that all who shew common civility to heretics, or give them alms, or once hear their sermons, are by them suspected of heresy.” Indeed, this last hath been mitigated by a considerable party among them; perhaps only the better to carry on their interest that way. But if once the tide should turn, then the old laws of their church must prevail, and nothing will be thought so wholsom as an inquisition. Since then no favour is to be expected from their church, let us endeavour to strengthen ourselves, by a hearty zeal for our religion, and using the best means to confirm and uphold it. And would to God we would learn this wisdom even from our enemies, not to widen our own differences by inveterate heats, bitterness and animosities among ourselves; but find out ways whereby even our dissenters may, in smaller things, be made useful to us, in maintaining the common interest of our church and religion. And it is a vain thing for any to think of separating these, or to hope the protestant religion can be preserved

among us, without supporting the church of *England*. For if once that bulwark be demolished, our adversaries will despise all the lesser branches of the reformation. I pray God therefore to grant our governors the spirit of wisdom and peace to find out the most proper means, for the establishment of our church and religion; and to give us all the spirit of knowledge to understand the things which belong to our peace, and of love, and unity to endeavour after them.

DISCOURSE XXIV. *Bp. Talbot.*

The church of England, a true church of Christ.

Acts 2. 47.

And the lord added to the church daily, such as should be saved.

THERE having been many disputes about the word church, it may be very proper, to settle the notion of it, in order to prove against the *Romanists*, that we of the reformed church of *England*, according to the scripture account, are members of a true and pure church. I shall also endeavour to excite in those of our communion, thankfulness to God, for bestowing and continuing so great a blessing to us; and likewise point out the true methods of preserving and transmitting it to our posterity. *St. Peter's* chief design in this chapter was to prove to the *Jews*, the great and fundamental article of the christian religion, that *Jesus* of

of *Nazareth*, whom they crucified, and God had raised from the dead, was the *messiah*, or Christ. This he demonstrates from the prophecies of the old testament, relating to the *messiah*, which were accomplished in *Jesus*, and also from the miracles that he had wrought among them ; and this discourse of the apostle had so marvellous an effect on the hearers, that on the same day, there were three thousand converted and baptized. This is the first account we meet with in the bible of a christian church, and from which we may best learn, what are the characters of it, or the requisites necessary to constitute one. This society is styled by the Holy Ghost, *the church*. “ The lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.” Hence we may conclude, that where ever the characters by which this church is described, are to be found, there is the true church ; and if she does not corrupt herself, by receiving any destructive additions in doctrine, worship, discipline, or rules of life, then we may be assured, that in such a church salvation is to be obtained. I shall from these words briefly enquire, what are the characters of, and requisites necessary to constitute a christian church, according to the description of this first apostolical church ; and having shewn, that all such characters and things necessary to a church, are to be found in the reformed church of *England*, who receives no doctrine, worship, discipline, or rules of life, that is corrupt, or contrary to scripture ; I shall then conclude with an application suitable to the subject matter of this discourse.

This primitive church consisted of the apostles, some former disciples, and new converts, who repented, believed, and were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, and continued in hearing the word preached, receiving the sacraments, and joining in public prayers ; all which are the requisites necessary to make a true church. So that where there

is a lawful ministry; and that the whole doctrine of Christ and his apostles is professed and taught in it; where the sacraments of his institution are duly administered, and public worship allowed for us to join in, agreeable to the scriptures; where all these requisites are, there are to be found a true church. And that the church of *England* has all these, I shall now endeavour to prove.

And first, we have a lawful ministry, true bishops and priests, who received imposition of hands from such as had valid orders, and were duly qualified to ordain them. For those holy bishops whom God was pleased to make use of for the reformation of our church, received their orders from the church of *Rome*, from whence our bishops and priests derive their succession; so that if the church of *Rome* have any good ordination, or true succession from the apostles, our succession and orders must be equally true and valid, and consequently we have a lawful ministry; and in our church is also professed and taught, the whole doctrine of Christ and his apostles. This must certainly be true, if the holy scriptures, and the three ancient creeds contain that doctrine, for these our church receives, and likewise willingly embraces any thing else that can be proved to be of apostolical tradition, universally received in all ages of the church. But as for later traditions, which have no foundation in scripture, but are rather repugnant to them, these she cannot allow to be of equal authority with scripture, nor dares to receive them as such, because neither Christ nor his apostles ever taught them. For instance; we do not believe nor teach, that the pope of *Rome* is the head and governor of the whole church; and the reason is, because there is no mention made in scripture of any other head of the church than Christ, "who is the head over all things to the church, which is his body; or he is the head of the body the church &c."

Ephes. 1. 22. Col. 1. 18.

Nor

Nor do we believe or teach, that the substance of bread and wine in the sacrament, is by consecration changed into the substance of Christ's natural body and blood; because the scriptures do not say any such thing, but assure us that Christ's body is in heaven, and there must remain till the restitution of all things, and therefore cannot be upon the altar. Our church also expressly calls the elements bread and wine after consecration; nor can it be supposed, that our saviour's words, *this is my body*, could be intended by him in the literal sense, or so understood by the apostles. It being impossible for him, whilst he was alive in the midst of them, to take into his hands and give to them his natural body and blood, to be bruised with their teeth, eaten, drank, and swallowed by them; and yet for this very same body, both then and after, to remain alive, sound and whole, without any visible change. This must have been a thing so prodigious and monstrous, as could not but have raised scruples and objections in the apostles. But we find nothing of this. We therefore cannot suppose, that he meant any other sense of the words, than a figurative one; namely, that it was a type, figure or representation of his body. There are other expressions of the like nature frequent in scripture; as when the rock is said to be Christ, and the cup the new testament in his blood. This is still the more easily to be believed, if we consider the expressions that were used in the *Jewish* passover, to which the lord's supper succeeded; for our lord was pleased to accommodate his institutions, as near as possible, to the ceremonies and phrases used among the *Jews*; and in their paschal feast, the master of the house took bread, and brake it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is the bread of affliction, which our fathers eat in *Egypt*." Thus our saviour in his institution, takes

bread

bread and breaks it, saying, "this is my body which is broken for you." But as that bread which the *Jews* took, and said of it, "this is the bread of affliction, &c." was not that very bread which their fathers had so long before eaten, but only intended for the type, or figure of it; so neither could the apostles, who were *Jews*, and acquainted with this way of speaking, believe that bread which our lord held in his hand, and of which he said, "this is my body which is broken for you," to be that real body of his, which they then saw before them whole at the table; but only the type and figure of that body, which was shortly to be broken for them upon the cross. Again,

We do not believe nor teach that there is in the mass or sacrament of the Lord's supper, a true proper sacrifice, propitiatory for the sins of the quick and dead; and yet as to this point, we do not want any thing the scripture teaches; and which most expressly asserts, that Christ is, and can be offered but once, and for these reasons; because by that one offering, "he has perfected for ever them that are sanctified; and if Christ was often offered, he must often have suffered, for without suffering, there can be no true offering, nor no remission without shedding of blood." Nor do we believe or teach such a third place in another life, as *purgatory*, wherein those who have repented, and been pardoned the eternal punishment of their sins, must yet suffer such pains, as differ from hell-torments only in duration, till they have paid the remainder of that debt of temporal pain, which was not satisfied in this life. For the scripture informs us only of two places after this life, the one prepared for the blessed of God, the other for the damned, assuring us that those "who die in the Lord, are blessed from thenceforth, in that they rest from their labours." We do not pretend there is a stock of merits in the church, which being applied will free

free men from temporary punishments, and to the more speedy releasing them from purgatory. Nor do we require any monies for masses and indulgencies for that purpose. These, indeed, and several other doctrines held in the church of *Rome*, we have not in ours, they being such as have no foundation in the scriptures, but are rather repugnant to them, nor are we for want of these deficient in the doctrine of Christ and his apostles; since whatever doctrines have been delivered by them, whether contained in the scriptures, summed up in the three creeds, or handed down by universal tradition, we readily own and embrace.

And as we receive the whole doctrine of Christ and his apostles, so we have the sacraments of Christ's institution, baptism and the Lord's supper, duly administered, as well as the church of *Rome*, but more agreeably to the scriptures. As to the first four of the five which they call sacraments, confirmation, orders, marriage, penance, and extreme unction, though we deny them to be sacraments, yet we have most of the main things intended by them. As for confirmation, our church has a particular office for it, and a rubric enjoining children when arrived to a competent age, and properly instructed in the church catechism, to be brought to the bishop to be confirmed, and to take upon them the vow made in their names at baptism. As for holy orders, we have it in great veneration, thinking no one capable of exercising the ministry, till commissioned to it by lawful imposition of hands. We retain the three orders of bishops, priests, and deacons, which have been in the church from the apostles time. We acknowledge with the apostle, that marriage is *honourable in all men*; in priests as well as laymen. And as to penance, this we have also; for though we do not exact a particular confession of private sins to a priest, in order to the forgiveness of them, nor send men on tedious

tedious pilgrimages, or require them to go barefooted, or to repeat a number of *Pater-nosters*, or *ave-maries*; or to cut and slash their bodies for the sins of their souls; yet our church does not refuse either public or private confession, that may be necessary to quiet men's consciences, by the exercise of that power of binding and loosing, which our Lord did really leave to his church. But though our church retains these four things, yet she cannot allow them to be sacraments, as are baptism and the Lord's supper, they not being of Christ's institution, nor necessary to salvation. As for that of extreme unction, we see no reason to use it at all. For the anointing referred to as spoken of by St. *James*, concerned those miraculous gifts of healing, which the apostles and first christians were endued with, but what has long since ceased. Indeed our church advises the sick to send for the elders of the church to unburden their consciences to them, if oppressed with sin, and to pray over the sick for their health, and the salvation of their souls; who give them spiritual advice and comfort, and even absolution, if they humbly and heartily desire it, for the ease and quiet of their minds. So that all of the seven that we find warranted in scripture, are retained by us, as well as the church of *Rome*; though we give the name of sacraments to those *two* only that were appointed by Christ as generally necessary to salvation.

Lastly, we have a public worship to join in agreeable to the scriptures, which was the other requisite necessary to make a true church. In the liturgy of our church, there are meek and humble confessions of sin, full and pertinent for all to join in. We have there most earnest and devout supplications for pardon, pathetical requests for particular graces, submissive petitions for temporal blessings, comprehensive intercessions for others, even our very enemies; also seraphical hymns, and

pious

pious thanksgivings. As to ceremonies, our church has only appointed a few in number, and those in their nature decent and fit for her public administrations. She has no prayers in an unknown tongue, which can only amuse but not edify the congregation; and according to *St. Paul*, the want of this can never render her worship defective. She has no addresses to the virgin *Mary*, nor to saints, there being neither command nor example in scripture, for offering up prayer and thanksgiving to any but God; but many prohibitions of such worship. We refuse not that respect which is due to the blessed virgin, and saints departed. We call her blessed, according to her own prediction. We honour the memory of saints, name them at our altars, bless God for those excellencies that shined in them, and beg for grace to imitate their examples. But we dare not pray to, nor give them that worship, which God has incommunicably reserved to himself. We give not any worship to images; in this our church cannot be defective, so long as the second commandment, though left out in the offices of the church of *Rome*, remains in the bible. So that in truth there is nothing in our church omitted, “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body, till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” If then our church has, as I have shewn, a succession of bishops, pastors, and teachers, duly qualified and ordained; if she holds the whole faith and doctrine of Christ and his apostles; receives all the sacraments of Christ’s appointment; and has a liturgy most agreeable to the primitive worship; then all necessary requisites are found in her to make a true church.

And

And as she is not defective in any thing required to a true church, so neither is she in any respect, a corrupt or unsound one. She requires no proposition to be believed which is false or untrue; none that offer violence to our reason, or which overthrow the plainest evidence of our senses, and invalidate the force of Christ's miracles; none that impeach his character as the Messiah, by supposing him to discharge imperfectly the duties of his office. She presumes not to dispense with, nor add to any part of his institutions. She does not provoke God's jealousy, by giving his honour to graven images, nor yet affront our one only mediator, by joining others, with him; nor amuse the people with prayers in a strange tongue, by which they know not, whether they are blessing God, or cursing men. In short, she imposes no terms of communion upon her members, either as to faith or practice, but what are agreeable with scripture. And as our church is a true christian church, having all the characters by which the first christian church was described; so is she a pure church, having received no addition in doctrine, worship, discipline or rules of life, that may corrupt her. And it ought to excite our thankfulness to God, for planting very early a true christian church in this island; for wonderfully reforming it, after being so desperately corrupted with superstition and idolatry; and for frequently preserving and mercifully continuing it in such purity to our times. But though,

The religion and worship now professed and exercised in our communion, are pure and most agreeable to the scriptures, yet it was not always thus with us. Indeed, God did visit us early with the glorious light of his gospel, most probably in the very time of the apostles; but afterwards the western heaven became darkened with midnight black-

blackness, and for many ages our ancestors groped in that thick darkness of popish error, superstition and idolatry, in which a great part of *Christendom* continues to this day. But it pleased God to raise up our blessed reformers, who discovered those absurdities in doctrine, corruptions in discipline, superstition and idolatry in worship, which avarice and ambition had, during the times of ignorance, introduced into the church. But though the evil spirit was thus ejected, yet upon the death of king *Edward VI.* he returned "with as great wrath as if he knew that he had but a short time." The number of bishops, clergy, and laity of both sexes, who cruelly perished in prison, or were burnt at a stake for the sake of religion, in queen *Mary's* reign, were so many, and those times so shocking, that we may say in the words of our saviour, that "except those days had been shortened," no protestants could have escaped destruction. Upon the succession of our glorious queen *Elizabeth*, the reformation revived, and was carried to greater perfection; and notwithstanding the many secret conspiracies, and open attempts of the *Romish* faction to destroy it, God hath still preserved our holy religion among us.

But it ought to be remembered, what large steps were taken by *James II.* to root out the northern heresy, and bring this church under the tyranny of the bishop of *Rome*; and the dreadful apprehensions which all the people of this land were then under, at their impending ruin: when God raised up a deliverer for us, *William III.* of glorious memory, who brought about that happy revolution, to which through God's mercy, we owe the enjoyment of both our civil rights, and reformed established religion; and that we have our present gracious king, and the succession settled in his protestant family. And we and our posterity, may worship
God

God in the beauty of holiness, in the communion of our church for many generations, unless our sins shall hinder so great a blessing. And do not such mercies of God, demand our most grateful acknowledgements, since without such gracious interpositions of divine providence, we had been as our popish ancestors were, “in darkness and the shadow of death.” It is of his tender mercy, that instead of having the light of the scripture taken from us; of being forced to comply with an implicit faith and blind obedience; of being obliged to contradict our senses, by believing against reason, and praying without understanding; of invoking saints, and giving divine worship to images, relicks and pieces of bread; we have continued to us the free use of the bible in our tongue, and no doctrines of faith, or duties in practice imposed, but what the scriptures plainly teach, and impartial reason must approve: that our worship is administered in a language we understand, and our addresses to God are offered up, through the only mediation of the one mediator betwixt God and man, the man Christ Jesus. These inestimable benefits of the reformation, and all other blessings which we now enjoy, are owing to the grace and bounty of our merciful God; and therefore should engage us to shew our unfeigned thankfulness for them.

Let us then express an hearty concern and true zeal, for his present majesty's government, and endeavour to secure the succession of the crown in his illustrious protestant family. The safety and happiness, nay the very being of our church, depend under God, upon preserving the succession of the crown in his royal house. Enquire into the times of our forefathers, or of the nations around us, whether ever a popish prince, did protect a protestant church; nay, if they have not always en-
deavoured

deavoured, when in their power, to extirpate protestants, and extinguish the very names of them. This is what their religion obliges them to, under pain of excommunication here, and damnation hereafter.

Blessed be God, we have a king on the throne*, adorned with all the virtues that can recommend a gracious prince, to a wise people; one who lives in constant communion with our church, who has given his royal word and oath, to protect and encourage it, and on all occasions has afforded us signal proofs of his kindness and favour to it. One who is blessed with a flourishing royal issue, from whom we may hope, that all the happiness we enjoy under him will be transmitted to our posterity. On the other hand, let us consider, that there is a pretender to the *British* crown; one who has sucked in the principles of popery and tyranny with his milk; who being educated in the cruel maxims of *Rome* and *France*, is obliged by his religion to destroy the northern heresy, particularly the church of *England*, which is the bulwark of it. And if he succeeds, there is a long train of popish princes after him, to perfect what he leaves undone. And if this be the case, how ought all protestants to behave themselves? Can we have any real value for our religion, and not act in supporting the defender of it, in opposition to one, who must destroy it if ever he be king? Ought we not to express at least as much zeal for the preservation of our happy constitution, when the government, laws, and even God himself has appeared on our side; as our enemies have shewn in defiance to all these, for the subversion of it? No caution or reserve will be of any advantage, should the pretender ever prevail; for the timorous neuters will share the same fate with those who honestly and bravely oppose it.

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* George II.

His zeal and revenge will make no distinction, nor can there be any merit in protestants, who being all heretics, must resolve to suffer, if they continue such. We have had but two openly avowed popish reigns since the reformation, and both prove the truth of this observation. For those protestants who appeared most forward and zealous in bringing those princes to the throne, were the first that had cause to repent of their folly and madness.

Let us then shew ourselves rational creatures, endowed with understanding and courage; for since God has wonderfully appeared for us, what need we fear who are against us? Let us resolutely do our duty in our respective stations, for the strengthening the hands of the government, and disheartening all its enemies; and let us in our daily addresses to God, beg of him to look on the face of his anointed; to protect his person, and all his royal family; to preside in his councils, and establish what is right; that under him and his royal issue, this church may long and joyfully serve God, in all godliness and righteousness of life. Let us also carefully avoid all factions and divisions; "for an house or a kingdom divided against itself, cannot stand, but is brought to desolation." The church of *England* has ever been the object of the church of *Rome's* hatred, against whom she has formed her deepest designs, and exerted her greatest force, as being the chief barrier of the reformation; which being once demolished, the other parts could not long oppose her. She finds that arguments will not do, scripture, antiquity, and reason being on our side. She has tried open force and secret plots, yet neither have succeeded. She has cursed us at her altars, but such curses cannot hurt them whom God hath blessed. Indeed, our strength under God lies in our unity, which if they deprive us of, we shall become first their derision, and then their

their prey; they will first insult us, and then destroy us. So that if we have any respect for our church, let us guard ourselves against the treacherous attempts of our enemies to ruin it, by dividing its members. Let all names of distinction be for ever forgotten. We all believe the same articles of faith, agree in the same rules of practice, join in the same worship, communicate in the same sacraments, submit to the same discipline. Let us then convince our enemies, that we truly love and value the church of *England*, and prefer her safety to any private considerations. And though there are some little differences among us, as to other matters, yet that we are resolved to unite as one man, in her defence.

And the most likely way to prevail with God to continue this invaluable blessing to us and our posterity, is to walk worthy of it, by adorning our christian profession, with an holy conversation. And if we do not, we may justly fear, that God will take away the kingdom of heaven from us, and give it to a nation, that shall bring forth the fruits thereof. If then we would engage God to preserve this church to us, let us express our love and zeal, not in talking for her, but in living according to her rules. Let the excellency of her constitution appear from the influence it has on her members, by its making us more holy and just, more temperate and meek, more humble and charitable, more eminent in all christian graces than others are. This with God's blessing will be the best method to enlarge and strengthen her, by bringing such as separate from her, into the pale of her communion; who seeing the light of our good works, may be thereby induced to join "with one mind and mouth with us, in glorifying our father which is in heaven."

DISCOURSE XXV. *Tillotson.*

The hazard of being saved in the church
of *Rome*.

I Cor. 3. 15.

But he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire.

IN these words the apostle speaks of some persons, who though they held the foundation of christianity, yet built upon it such doctrines and practices as would not bear the trial; this he expresses to us, by *wood, hay, and stubble*, which are not proof against fire. Though the apostle tells us, that such were in a very dangerous state, yet he would not deny them the possibility of their salvation: “ he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire.”

To be saved, *yet so as by fire*, or, *out of the fire*, is a known proverbial phrase, used not only in scripture, but in prophane authors, to signify a narrow “ escape out of a great danger.” Thus, “ I have plucked them as a firebrand out of the fire* ; others save with fear, plucking them out of the fire.” And so the phrase in the text is to be rendered, “ he himself shall escape, yet so as out of the fire.” All which expressions signify the greatness of the danger, and the difficulty of escaping it ; and this phrase is used by *Chrysostom, Cicero, and Aristides*, in the very same sense ; nay, the latter says, that “ to save a man out of the fire was a common proverbial speech.”

* Amos 4. 11. Jude 23.

The observation I would make from the words thus explained, is, “ that men may hold all the fundamentals of the christian religion, and yet by super-adding other things, they may greatly endanger their salvation.” What it was that some of the *Corinthians* had built upon the foundation of christianity, whereby they endangered their salvation, we may probably conjecture, by what the apostle reproves in this epistle, such as the tolerating of incestuous marriages, communicating in idol feasts, &c. And what their doctrine was, we have an account in *Acts* 15. namely, that they imposed upon the *Gentile* christians circumcision, and the observation of the *Jewish* law, teaching, that unless they were circumcised, and kept the law of *Moses*, they could not be saved. So that they did not only build these doctrines upon christianity, but made them equal with the foundation, and necessary to salvation.

My present design is to present you with some of those doctrines and practices, which have been built upon the foundation of christianity, by the church of *Rome*, to the great hazard and danger of men's salvation ; and after this, to enquire, whether our granting a possibility of salvation, though with great hazard, to those in the *Roman* communion, and their denying it to us, be a reasonable argument and encouragement for any man to resort to that church? And there is the more reason to consider these points, when so many seducing spirits are so active and busy to pervert men from the truth. — It is not denied by the most judicious protestants, but that the church of *Rome* do hold all the articles of the christian faith, necessary to salvation. But the just reason of our separation from them, is their imposing of *new doctrines* and *practices* upon christians, as necessary to salvation, which were never taught by our sa-

viour or his apostles, and are either directly contrary to the design of christianity, or too apparently destructive of a good life.

I begin with their doctrines; and first that of *infallibility*, which being once admitted, makes way for as many errors as they please to introduce. Though they are very positive and peremptory in this, yet they are not agreed among themselves, where this *infallibility* is lodged; whether in the *pope* alone, or a *council* alone, or in *both* together, or in the diffusive body of christians? But they are sure they have it, though they know not where it is; and which is no small prejudice against it. For can any one think that this privilege was conferred on the church of *Rome*, and that Christians in all ages did believe it, and had constant recourse to it, for determining their differences; and yet that this very church, which hath enjoyed and used it so long, should not know where to find it? Strange indeed! that there should be such differences among them about what they pretend, to be the only means of ending all differences. But there is not the least intimation in scripture of this privilege being conferred upon the *Roman* church, nor is there any direction given by the apostles for christians to appeal to the bishop of *Rome*, for determining the many differences, which arose even in those times; and surely they would not have been silent in this affair, had our Saviour appointed such an *infallible judge* of controversies, for deciding of differences among christians; and had this been so, it is very wonderful, that the ancient fathers in their disputes with heretics, should never appeal to this judge. This consideration may serve instead of other arguments, to satisfy any reasonable man, that in those times no such thing was believed in the world. And if this doctrine of *infallibility* be not true, the consequence is still
more

more pernicious and fatal to christianity, because it tends to confirm those who believe it in all their errors, and gives them a pretence of assuming an authority, to impose their own fancies upon the whole christian world.

Secondly, their doctrine about *repentance*, which consists in their confessing their sins to the priest, and if accompanied with any degree of contrition, it puts them upon the priest's absolution, into a state of salvation, though their lives have been the most lewd and debauched; and what can be more destructive of a good life? For if this be true, the only danger a wicked man runs of his salvation, is a sudden death, by which he is deprived of confession and absolution. A case this that rarely happens. And all the arguments to a good life will be very insignificant to a wicked man, when the pardon of his sins may be obtained upon such easy terms.

Thirdly, The doctrine of *purgatory*; that is a state of temporary punishments after this life, from which men may be released and translated to heaven by the prayers of the living, and the sacrifice of the mass. That this doctrine was not known in the primitive church, nor can be proved from scripture, is acknowledged by many learned and eminent men of that church; so that it is evidently a superstructure upon the christian religion; and though, considering the vast revenues which this doctrine, and that of indulgences, which depends upon it, brings into the *Roman* church, it may in one sense, be a building of gold and silver, upon the foundation of christianity; yet I doubt not but in the apostle's sense, it will be found to be *hay* and *strubble*: however, it is too gainful a doctrine to be ever parted with.

Fourthly, the doctrine of *transubstantiation*; a hard word, but the thing itself is much more difficult;

ficult. And no other religion in the world did ever impose upon the belief of men, any article half so unreasonable and hard to be believed, as this is ; and yet this is esteemed in the *Romish* church, one of the most principal articles of the christian faith ; though there is no more certain foundation for it in scripture, than for our saviour's being substantially changed into a *rock*, a *vine*, a *door*, and many other things which are said of him. But this doctrine hath not only no foundation in scripture, but it undermines the very foundation of christianity itself. That this doctrine does so, will evidently appear, if we consider, that the main argument which the apostles used to convince the world of the truth of christianity, was, " that our blessed saviour, the author of this doctrine, wrought several miracles, and particularly that he rose again from the dead ; and this they proved by being eye-witnesses of his miracles, and having seen and conversed with him, after he was risen from the dead. But what if their senses deceived them in this matter ? Why then, the main proof of christianity falls to the ground. Let us now suppose with the church of *Rome*, that *transubstantiation* was one principal part of the christian doctrine practised by the apostles. But if this doctrine be true, then all men's senses are deceived, in a sensible manner, and wherein it is scarce possible for them to be deceived. For two things can hardly be imagined more different, than a bit of *wafer*, and the *whole body* of a man ; so that to suppose the apostles did persuade men to believe this doctrine, we must also suppose that they persuaded them not to trust to their senses ; when yet the argument which they used to persuade them to this, was built upon the direct contrary principle, namely, that men's *senses* are to be *trusted*. For if they be not, then notwithstanding all the evidence

dence the apostles offered, for the resurrection of our saviour, he might not be risen, and so the faith of christians was vain. Thus do they absurdly represent the apostles, as persuading men out of their senses by virtue of an argument, the whole strength whereof depends upon the certainty of sense.

And now the matter is brought to a fair issue; if the testimony of *sense* is to be relied upon, then *transubstantiation* is false; if it be not, then no man is sure, that christianity is true. For the utmost assurance the apostles had, of the truth of christianity, was the testimony of their own senses, concerning our saviour's miracles; and this testimony every one hath against *transubstantiation*. From whence it plainly follows, that no man, not even the apostles, had more reason to believe christianity to be true, than every one hath to believe *transubstantiation* to be false. But to press this a little farther; supposing the scripture to be a *divine revelation*, and that these words, *this is my body*, if they must be taken in the strict and literal sense; let me then ask what greater evidence can we have, that these words, *this is my body*, are in the bible, than every one has, that the bread is not changed in the sacrament? Nay, not so much; for we have only the evidence of *one* sense, that these words are in the bible; but that the bread is not changed, we have the concurring testimony of *several* of our senses. And if our senses can be deceived, in a matter so plain and sensible, there is no certain method whatever to prove a divine revelation; nor confute the grossest impostures in the world. For if the clear evidence of all men's senses be not sufficient, what better or more convincing argument can we find for this purpose?

Fifthly, I will instance but in one doctrine more, which is, that of deposing kings in case of heresy,

and of absolving subjects from their allegiance to them. This is not a meer *speculative* doctrine, but what the bishops of *Rome* have frequently practised; though directly contrary to the doctrine of our saviour, his apostles, and the primitive christians. *Transubstantiation* and *this* were both established by the council of *Lateran*, under pope *Innocent III.* one would indeed think them to be twins, they are so like one another, both being so monstrously unreasonable. I now proceed to consider some practices of the church of *Rome*, which are as bad as her doctrines. I shall only instance in these following particulars.

First, their celebrating of divine service in an *unknown tongue*; not only contrary to the practice of the primitive church, to the great end and design of religious worship, which is the edification of those who are concerned in it; (and how can this be, if men do not understand it? (but also in direct contradiction to *St. Paul*, who fully confutes and plainly condemns this practice. Secondly, the communion in *one kind*; though they themselves acknowledge, that our saviour instituted, and the primitive church administered it in both kinds. Indeed, this is no addition to christianity, but a *sacrilegious* taking away an essential part of the sacrament. For the *cup* is as *necessary* a part of the institution, as the *bread*; and they might as well take away one, or both, as either. Thirdly, their *worshipping of images*; this practice, notwithstanding all their distinctions, which are the very same as the heathens made in the like case, is as directly contrary to the second commandment, as the deliberate and malicious killing of a man, is against the sixth. This is so plain a case, that the teachers of that church fearing, lest the people should be sensible of it, they have in their catechisms and manuals of devotion, left out the second commandment,

ment, and to make up the number, divide the *tenth* into *two*. Fourthly, the worshipping of the bread and wine in the sacrament, from a false and groundless perswasion, that they are *substantially* changed into the body and blood of Christ, which if it be not true, as it is incredible and impossible that it should be so; then by the confession of several of their own learned writers, they are guilty of gross *idolatry*. Fifthly, the worship and invocation of saints and angels, particularly of the virgin *Mary*, which is a principal part of their religion, though no manner of foundation for it in scripture. Does our saviour any where speak one word of worshipping her? Nay, does he not take all occasions to restrain all extravagant imaginations, concerning the honour due to her, foreseeing the degeneracy of the the church in this thing? When he was told that his mother and brethren were without; who, says he, “are my mother and my brethren? He that doth the will of my father, the same is my mother, and sister, and brother.” And when the woman brake forth into that rapture, concerning the blessed mother of our lord, “blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps that gave thee suck,” our saviour diverts to another thing, “yea, rather blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.” Our saviour, nor his apostles, in all their directions concerning prayer, do not give the least intimation, of praying to the virgin *Mary*, or making use of her mediation; nor is her name once mentioned in all the epistles of the apostles. And yet the worship of her is now, and hath been for several ages, the chief part of their public worship, and private devotion; and for one prayer they offer to God, they make ten addresses to the blessed virgin. He that considers *this*, and had never seen the *bible*, would suppose that more is said in scripture, of worshipping her,

than either of God, or our blessed saviour; and yet I challenge any man to produce one text in the whole bible, that sounds that way. The truth is, this practice began to creep in among some superstitious people, about the middle of the fourth century; and *Epiphanius*, who lived then, called it the *heresy* of the *women*. These are some instances of the many doctrines and practices, which the church of *Rome* hath built upon the foundation of christianity; more might be added, but enough is said, to shew how dangerous they are to men's salvation.

I now proceed to consider, whether our granting a *possibility of salvation*, though with great hazard to those of the *Roman* church, and their denying it to us, be a sufficient argument or encouragement for any to quit our church, and go to theirs. To examine this point is the more necessary, because its the great popular argument, where-with the emissaries and agents of *Rome* do generally assault our people. "Your church, say they, grants that a papist may be saved; ours denies that a protestant can be saved; therefore it is safest to be of our church, in which salvation by the acknowledgment of both sides, is possible." In answer to this, I shall endeavour to shew, that this is so intolerably weak and sophistical an argument, that any considerate man would be ashamed to use it. For either it is sufficient of itself, to persuade a person to leave our church, and go to theirs, without examining into, and comparing the doctrines and practices of both churches, or it is not. But if it be not sufficient of itself, for this purpose, then it is of no weight. For if upon examination and comparing of doctrines, the one appears to be *true*, and the other *false*, this alone is a sufficient reason, for any one to continue in that church, where the true doctrine is found; and then
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this argument is needless. Should it be said that this argument is good in itself, without examining the doctrines of both churches; I mean, that "there is reason enough for a man to be of any church, whatever her doctrines and practices be, if she do but damn those that differ from her; and if the church differing from her, do but allow a possibility of salvation in her communion." But this is such an absurdity, as that the bare mentioning of it, seems sufficient to confute it; however, I will as briefly and plainly as I can, shew the weakness and insufficiency of this principle, namely, "that whatever religion different parties agree in, that is safest to be chosen." The true consequence of which principle is, to persuade men to forsake christianity, and make them take up with the principles of natural religion, in which all religions agree. For if this principle be true, it is dangerous to embrace any religion wherein the several parties differ; because that is only safe to be chosen, wherein all agree; so that this argument, if a good one, will prove too much; for it will not only make men forsake the protestant religion, but popery too, and even christianity itself.

It will be proper to give a few parallel instances, by which it will appear, that this argument concludes false. The *Donatists* denied the baptism of the catholics to be good, but the catholics owned theirs to be valid; so that both agreed, that the baptism of the *Donatists* was good, therefore, according to this argument, the safest way for St. *Austin* and other catholics, was to be again baptized by the *Donatists*, because both acknowledged their baptism to be valid. Again, several in the church of *Rome* hold the personal *infallibility* of the pope, and the lawfulness of deposing and killing kings for *heresy*, to be necessary articles of faith, and

that whoever does not thus believe cannot be saved. But a great many papists, though they believe these things to be no matters of faith, yet think those who hold them may be saved. But according to this argument, they ought all to be of their opinion, because both agree, that they who hold them may be saved; but one side positively says, that men cannot be saved, if they do not hold them. My text also furnishes me with a very good instance to the same purpose; *St. Paul* here acknowledges the possibility of the salvation of those, who built hay and stubble upon the foundation of christianity; and says, that they might be saved, though with great difficulty, as it were out of the fire. Among those who built with hay and stubble, there were some who denied the possibility of *St. Paul's* salvation, and all those who were of his mind. For some built the *Jewish* ceremonies and observances, upon the foundation of christianity, and said, that unless men were circumcised and kept the law of *Moses*, they could not be saved; so that by this argument, *St. Paul* and his followers ought to have gone over to those *judaizing* christians, because both sides acknowledged, that they might be saved. But can any one think, that *St. Paul* would have been moved by this argument, to leave a safe and certain way of salvation, for that which was only possible, or with great difficulty and hazard to be obtained? The argument is the same here, but concludes the wrong way; which plainly proves, that this is a very uncertain argument, and not to be relied on. Besides, there are many gross absurdities that follow from it.

For according to this principle, it is always safest to be on the uncharitable side; and yet the want of charity is as bad an evidence of a true christian, or a true church, as a man could wish. Charity is one of most essential marks of christianity;
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and what the apostle saith of particular christians, is as true of whole churches, that though "they have all faith, yet if they have not charity, they are nothing." I grant, that no charity teaches men to see others damned, and not to tell them of their danger. But then the damning of men is a hard thing, and the case should be exceeding plain. But is it so in this matter? The church of *Rome* cannot deny, but that we embrace all the doctrines of our saviour, contained in the apostles creed, and determined by the four first general councils; and yet they will not allow this, and a good life, to put us within a possibility of salvation, because we will not submit to all the innovations they would impose upon us. But was this a good argument, then by this trick a man may bring over all the world to agree with him in any error, which another does not think damnable, provided he does but damn all who do not hold it; and there wants nothing but confidence and uncharitableness to do this. But is another man's boldness and want of charity a good argument to move me to be of his opinion? I would illustrate this, by the difference between a skilful physician and a mountebank: a learned and expert physician is modest, and speaks justly of things; he says, that his method of cure is safe, and that though what the mountebank prescribes may possibly do it, yet there is great hazard and danger in it; but the mountebank, who always talks of infallible cures, (and the more mountebank the stronger his pretensions to infallibility) is ever positive, that the method the physician prescribes will destroy the patient, but that his own is infallible and never fails. But is there any reason, that this man shall be preferred only for his confidence? And yet if this argument be good, the safest way is to reject the physician's advice, and follow the

mountebank's. For both sides agree, that there is a possibility of cure in the mountebank's method, but not in the physician's. So that the stress of this argument lies in the confidence of an ignorant man. In truth, this argument is very improper to be urged by the *Romanists*, because the chief strength of it lies in this, that protestants acknowledge it is possible papists may be saved. But why are heretics to be minded in this, who in all other things are so damnably mistaken? However, when it serves their purpose, we have some little credit and authority among them.

I hope the weakness of this argument has been sufficiently proved, which is so evident that no wise man can honestly use it; and none but such as are of a very mean understanding can be cheated by it. Indeed, this argument is both casual and contingent, and oftener concludes wrong, than right; and therefore no prudent person will be governed by it. For surely no man is so weak, as not to consider in the change of his religion, the merits of the cause itself, as not to examine the doctrines and practices of the churches on both sides; and all other things which ought to move a conscientious and prudent man; and if upon enquiry, there appears to be a clear advantage on either side, then this argument is needless, and the work is done without it. But the great hazard of salvation in the *Romish* church, on account of the doctrines and practices before-mentioned, ought to deter any man much more from that religion, than the acknowledged possibility of salvation should encourage people to embrace it. For never did any other christian church build so much hay and stubble upon the foundation of christianity, and therefore those who are saved in it, must be saved as it were, *out of the fire*. Purgatory, though not mentioned in the text, is yet a doctrine well suited to their building, which

which wants a fire to burn up their hay and stubble. However, I have so much charity as to hope that many among them, who live piously, and have been inevitably detained in that church, by the prejudice of education and an invincible ignorance, will upon a general repentance, find mercy with God; and though their works suffer loss and be burnt, yet that they themselves may escape, as out of the fire. But as for those who have the opportunity of knowing the truth, if they continue in the errors of that church, or apostatize to it, I think their condition so far from being safe, that there is but little hope of their salvation.

I had much rather persuade any one to be a good man, than to be of any party or denomination of christians whatsoever. For I doubt not but the belief of the *ancient* creed; provided we entertain nothing that is destructive of it, together with a good life, will certainly save a man; and without this, no man can have reasonable hopes of salvation, no not in an infallible church, if any such there be in the world. I have not been a negligent observer of the genius and humour of the several sects and professions in religion; and I do in my conscience believe, that the church of *England* is the best constituted church in the world; and that as to the main, the doctrine, government, and worship of it, are excellently framed to make men soberly religious; securing men on the one hand from the madness of *enthusiasm*; and on the other, from the gross follies of *superstition*.

And shall then every trifling consideration be sufficient to move any person to forsake such a church? There is no greater reflection on a man's understanding, no greater augument of a light and injudicious mind, than rashly to change one's religion. *Religion* is of all other our greatest concern,

cern, and not every little argument, no nor a great noise about infallibility, nothing but very plain and convincing evidence should sway a man in this case. But they must be very inexcusable, who change upon the insinuations of one side only, without ever hearing what can be said for the church they were baptized and brought up in, before they leave it. They that can thus easily yield to the persuasions of others, who have a design and interest to make profelytes, may as well change their religion twice a day; and instead of morning and evening prayer, they may have a morning and evening religion. Therefore, for the sake of God, of our own souls, of our reputation, let us consider and shew ourselves men; let us not be carried away with every wind, nor run ourselves into danger when we may be safe. Let us stick to the foundation of religion, the articles of our common belief, and build upon them gold and silver, and precious stones, I mean, the virtues and actions of a good life. And if we sincerely endeavour to live holy and virtuous lives, we shall not want a religion to carry us to heaven, by any easy and indirect ways. "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast and unmovable, always abounding in the work of the lord."

DIS

DISCOURSE XXVI. *Lovel.*

Popery epitomized.

Gal. 5. 1.

Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

THE apostle here dissuades the *Galatians* from wearing the yoke of *Jewish* rites and ceremonies, after they were delivered from the pressures of paganism and idolatry; and this doctrine of *St. Paul* is very applicable to our unhappy times, when some are endeavouring to bring upon our necks a severer yoke, than what the apostle complains of; I mean, that insupportable bondage of popish superstition and tyranny, “which neither we, nor our fathers were able to bear.” The tragedy which was intended to be acted in this nation by the gunpowder plot, is a standing memorial of this truth; of the heathenish, or rather diabolical tenets of that church, which consecrates parricides, authorizes the most barbarous cruelties, teaches men to kill not single persons only, but whole communities; king, prince, bishops, nobles, our whole senate, being the victims then destined to the fury and revenge of the pope and his conclave. A projected plot this, that might at one blow, have made our whole church and state a public sacrifice. Can we after this sufficiently detest such abominable doctrines, or keep at too great a distance from us, that race of men, or rather monsters,

monsters, "that like roaring lions go about seeking whom they may devour."

But this is not the first instance of popish cruelty; for if we trace the history of all ages ever since the papal usurpation, we shall find the genius and spirit of that religion still the same wherever it prevails, and popes thundering out *anathemas* and *excommunications*, darting forth quivers of curses and execrations against all that oppose their impious decrees. Emperors both of the east and west have often felt the most dreadful effects of papal tyranny and rage, in the murders and rebellions which have been caused through their dominions, by those who call themselves *St. Peter's* successors. Thus *Boniface VIII.* excommunicated *Philip* king of *France*, and cursed him and his race to the fourth generation, because he would not suffer him to impoverish his subjects, by carrying away their money to *Rome*; which was the only reason of his absolving the king's subjects from their allegiance, and giving his kingdom to the emperor *Albert*. To produce every instance of their deposing emperors and kings, exciting children to the most unnatural rebellion against their own fathers and sovereigns, and of involving those unhappy nations, where popery prevails, in blood and destruction, would engage me in the lives of the popes, for at least a thousand years; in which time they have exercised the utmost barbarities, and left in every country in the christian world, the most dismal tokens of their rage and cruelty.

If we consult the annals of our own nation, we shall find them sadly stained with the blood of martyrs, spilt through popish bigotry and superstition. What perpetual struggles had our great *Elizabeth* with the *Romish* hydra, that legion of evil spirits, which *Rome* let loose upon her? And in the following reigns, what did they not do to introduce
their

their idolatrous worship, and pernicious doctrines among us? To what precipitate measures did their furious bigotry and zeal hurry that unhappy prince king *James II.* who by their destructive counsels, trampled on our laws, vacated our charters, suspended and imprisoned our bishops and clergy, and by assuming a dispensing power over all laws, overturned our whole constitution in church and state. Nay, how successful have they been in baiting our poor church, even with its own members, and by the help of their magical terms and distinctions, to engage protestants themselves to destroy the reformation, and churchmen to pull down the church; and that for a reason, which posterity will never credit, I mean, under a pretence of preserving it.

From this short narrative of popish principles and practices, we may easily discern what would be our fate, should God in his just displeasure against us, for our national perjury and perfidiousness, again suffer a popish prince to reign over us. For what may we not fear from a bigot, sharpened with revenge, whose nature and principles will make him "chastise us with scorpions, and rule us with a rod of iron." Indeed, popery with some seems to have lost all its former sting, as if it was grown more tame and gentle, and with some slight advances on our side, might be easily incorporated with our religion. But the falsity of this will appear, from my next consideration, which shall be to take a view of popery with respect to another world, as well as this, whereby it will be fully proved, that it is a most insupportable yoke of bondage.

And let it be first observed, that the *Romish* church hath never receded from any one article of faith, doctrine, or opinion, decreed in their councils. The *Trentine* creed, enacted by a pope and council, which contains the summary of their doctrine, and is still received by them, confirms all those

those absurdities, heresies, and idolatries, that gave occasion for the reformation. And we cannot join in their communion, without partaking of their idolatrous worship, and maintaining such doctrines, as are perfectly destructive of true faith in Christ, and an holy life. But it may be proper to descend to a few particulars, the better to defend ourselves against so vile a religion, and grand imposture. And the first instance I shall give of their spiritual tyranny, is what nearly concerns you all, namely, the denying the people the free use of the scriptures. Our bibles, whenever popery prevails, must all be burnt, and the key of knowledge, that opens the mystery of salvation, be kept from the people; that holy book, which is most full of consolation, advice, direction and reproof, that points out the way to heaven, and is to be our guide to eternal life. This book, this volume of inestimable treasure, must be taken from the unlearned laity, and they left to grope their way in the uncertain tracts of doubts and errors, or be only allowed some mangled parts of scripture, such as may keep them in subjection to some false director of their consciences, in order to preserve his dominion over them. Indeed their pretence for this, is the prevention of heresy and schism, which they say is owing to the ignorance of the people, whereas in truth most errors have proceeded from men of learning. Besides, are they wiser than our Saviour who commands us "to search the scriptures." The *Bereans* are commended for their study of them; and *St. Paul* exhorted *Timothy* to "adhere to the holy scriptures, which he had learnt from a child": nay the *Jews* were so intent upon these religious exercises, as to get many parts of the scriptures by heart.

And

* John 5. 39. Acts 17. 11. 2 Tim. 3. 15.

And what greater objections can lie against christians reading the gospel, than against the *Jews* reading their law? But the hiding this book, was never urged by them, as a reason to prevent heresy and schism. We may as well prohibit all meat for fear of surfeits, which often occasion the death of many, as forbid the use of the scriptures, because some pervert them to their own destruction. Though there were some things in *St. Paul's* epistles, that were hard to be understood," yet he never forbids the use of them on that account, but orders even those hard epistles to "be publickly read to all the brethren†." The true reason, no doubt, of this gross imposition of the church of *Rome*, is, lest the frauds of their church should be exposed, and their errors confuted by the word of God; to prevent which, their interest leads them to keep their followers in the greatest darkness.

Another instance of that church's insufferable tyranny is, the enjoining of public prayers, in a language unknown to the people; a practice this so contrary to that edification which the apostle recommends; so opposite to the great ends and reasons of public devotion, which is to offer up our joint prayers and praises to God; and so directly contrary to the express words of *St. Paul*, that it is amazing to think, that any who acknowledge the scriptures to be the word of God, should act so opposite to them. Whoever will read the fourteenth chapter of the first epistle to the *Corinthians*, will find a full confutation of this abominable practice of praying in an unknown tongue; and yet this must be brought in among us, if ever we are so unhappy, as to fall again under the dominion of the church of *Rome*.

Transubstantiation is another instance of papal tyranny; a doctrine which teaches, that after consecration

† 1 Thess. 5. 27.

secration there remains no bread and wine in the sacrament of the Lord's supper, but that they are changed into the true substance of the body and blood of Jesus Christ. This is a proposition so barbarous and absurd, and so highly reflecting on human understanding, that it is matter of the greatest wonder, how any persons in any age should be so weak and credulous, as ever to give it countenance. For if this doctrine be true, then all evidence from sense must be rejected; we must neither believe what we see, feel, or taste; and if this way of reasoning be allowed, the whole structure of our christian faith will at once fall to the ground. The best proofs we have for the truth of christianity, arise from the evidence of sense, and the testimony of those who were witnesses of our Saviour's miracles and resurrection from the dead; and our Saviour knowing this to be the best proof of his divine mission, allowed so great weight to it, that he permitted St. *Thomas* "to handle and feel him," after his resurrection, that upon the report and conviction of his own senses, he might be assured of the reality of his divine being and presence, and of the truth and certainty of his resurrection. But according to the popish system, we must slight the information of our senses, believe against the evidence of our eyes, pronounce a wafer to be flesh and blood, though we are infallibly assured, by the same demonstration which supports the gospel, that it is no such thing, nor even like a human body. Nay, according to them, we must believe, that Christ held in his hand, and gave his whole body to be eaten, and yet after that it remained whole and untouched; that it is entirely in heaven, and at the same time, wheresoever the priest pleases to make it upon earth. We must believe it whole in one place, and broken in another; in one man's hand, and in the mouth or belly of another; corrupting in one place

place, but pure and unmingled in another. By this doctrine, we must believe that the accidents of bread subsist without their substance; and the substance of a human body without its proper accidents. In short, we must believe the greatest absurdities, even that the priest has power to make God when he pleases; which is to give up at once our whole reason and understanding, our common sense and religion too, all which are directly contrary to this monstrous notion of *transubstantiation*.

In defence of this absurd doctrine, they urge the power of our Saviour to work miracles, and that nothing is impossible with the Almighty. This we admit; but then we say, that whenever miracles are wrought, there is an appeal to our senses for the truth of them, and the change will evidently appear to convince us of their being real miracles. Thus when our Saviour changed the water into wine, the guests presently distinguished the liquor by its properties; they found it to be wine, by their several senses of seeing, smelling and tasting: and without these convictions, he had never gained their assent, by only telling them it was changed, if the water had still retained its native property. No doubt, Christ may if he pleases instantly convert a piece of bread into a human body, and "of stones raise up children to *Abraham*;" but whenever this power is exerted, it will be by changing the bread into the nature and proportion of man, that the eye may have undoubted proofs of the alteration. And whenever papists can do this to the consecrated wafer, we will own the miracle, and believe it to be done by the mighty power of God; but till then we can never believe *transubstantiation*, a thing that is so contrary to our senses. Nor is their having the letter of scripture on their side any advantage to them, for if bread be the real body of Christ, because he said, "this is my body," then these words

words "this cup is the new testament in my blood," must be also taken literally; and so the cup is likewise changed into a "testament in blood," or into blood, which must be done if the words are to be taken in a literal sense. But if a figure be admitted for the one, why not for the others. And St. Paul called it bread, no less than four times after consecration. Besides, without allowing of this figurative way of writing in the scriptures, how can we make sense of our Saviour's being called a *rock*, a *vine*, a *door*, which the *Romanists* as well as we, own to be metaphorical, though they are all very plain, intelligible, just and proper expressions? And if our enemies can admit these for figurative expressions, why should not the same be allowed of the words, at the institution of the sacrament? Since there is at least equal occasion for such a construction, as well for the credit and safety of christianity, as for the sake of our common sense and reasoning, which are all overthrown by the wild hypothesis of *transubstantiation*.

Another instance of popish tyranny and bondage, which they would impose on us, is their doctrine of purgatory, by which they have chalked out a new way to heaven, unknown to Christ and his apostles. Their story of this place is a mere poetical fiction, a fabulous narrative of their own; a place as they say, where impure souls are cleansed from the stains and pollutions they contracted in this life, and their imperfect faith and repentance are supplied by suffering such torments, as will make up the defects of Christ's suffering for mankind. What dishonour is this to our Saviour's merits? "tho' whom alone we have salvation, and whose blood cleanses us from all sin*." A doctrine this, calculated to encourage the lusts and vicious inclinations of human nature, the vilest practices of ill-living,

* Acts 4. 12. 1 John 1. 7.]

living, upon the prospect of atoning for sins in purgatory, and so escaping the eternal flames of hell. But this is a most gainful doctrine, one of the best perquisites of the *Romish* church, which has wonderfully enriched itself by the help of their pretended masses, to rescue the souls in purgatory from their pains. They describe this place to be full of terror, the torments of purgatory being supposed equal in degree, though not in duration, to those of hell. But all these frightful figures are drawn only to enrich their church, and enlarge their power and dominion over their deluded flock, who are taught to believe, that by their generous offering when they die, this will purchase an early redemption from that prison, which only leaves the poor in that unhappy state; who according to their doctrine of purgatory may lie there many ages, for want of money to purchase their liberty. But let such persons know for their comfort, that they may be rich in grace and favourites of heaven, though poor in this life; that God will own them for his, and reward their piety and patience, with a place in *Abraham's* bosom, as soon as they depart hence; when it is much to be feared, that the rich votaries of the *Romish* communion, who foolishly depend on the sacrifice of the mass, to the neglect of virtuous and holy living, shall be sentenced to spend a miserable eternity, without the benefit of one drop of water, in return for the liberal offerings they left to redeem their souls from punishment.

I must not omit their *image worship*, a most gross idolatry and imposition, though covered over with the specious pretence of kindling devotion, and instructing the ignorant by that method; when it is plain, that the people do really pay to the images a religious worship, and this they are directed to do by the two councils of *Nice* and *Trent*, which expressly order them to be worshipped: nor will the distinction

distinction between material and formal idolatry, or determining their worship finally through this medium, on the only true God, lessen their crime, this being the very apology which the heathens formerly used; for the scriptures reject such distinctions, and condemn their impious practice*. Their *prayers to saints and angels*, are no less criminal than ridiculous, by placing them in the room of the Almighty, by ascribing an immensity and omniscience to created beings, and depreciating the merits of our Saviour; also by making them joint intercessors with him, and supposing them able to deliver others out of their troubles; a power which is peculiar to the true God.

I might here also expose their abominable practice in depriving the laity of the cup in the sacrament, expressly contrary to our Saviour's institution; their scandalous sale of, and market for indulgencies, by which men are taught to sin without fear, and to neglect an holy life; their auricular confession, which is merely political, and a cunning stratagem of their church, to discover the secrets of private persons and states; and their doctrine about the intention of the priest, on which depends the validity of the sacraments, and all their other offices; so that the people can never be sure of receiving the benefits that flow from such ordinances, or be certain, whether the priest does not secretly curse, instead of blessing them. It would be endless to enumerate all the vile doctrines of that church, but I cannot omit their boasted doctrine of the pope's *supremacy*, because it is the foundation on which the whole structure of popery is built.

The popes pretend, that *Rome* is the mother church and centre of unity to all other churches, as being the successors in that see to *St. Peter*, who
inherit

* Exod. 20. 5. Lev. 26. 1.

inherit all those virtues, prerogatives and powers, which our Saviour bestowed upon that apostle, when he said, "feed my sheep. Thou art *Peter*, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it, and I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven*." Hence they conclude, that the keys of heaven are in their disposal, and that they can admit and shut out whom they please. Upon this authority they ground their indulgencies; the treasure and merits of the church being in their power to distribute as they think fit. In answer to this, let it be observed, that the same power was equally given to all the apostles after Christ's resurrection, as to St. *Peter* †; from whence it follows, that every bishop, being a successor in the apostolical office, has as much right to all those privileges as any bishop of *Rome*, even supposing him to be St. *Peter's* successor. But in truth, it is much to be questioned, whether he ever was at *Rome*, or bishop of that see; if so, then the pope's supremacy grounded upon their succession to that apostle, is all a fallacy and gross imposition. As St. *Peter* was an apostle of the circumcision amongst the *Jews*, so was St. *Paul* of the uncircumcision amongst the *Gentiles*. And the words of St. *Paul* to the *Romans* are very remarkable. "So have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another's foundation ||;" which he could not have said, had *Peter* been bishop of *Rome* so many years as the papists pretend.

But supposing St. *Peter* was at *Rome* and bishop thereof, and the popes to be his successors in that see;

* Mat. 16. 18, 19. † John 20. 22. 23. || Romans 15. 20.

see; this does not prove, that they have any jurisdiction out of their diocese, or greater privileges than the bishops of other sees, who succeeded the rest of the apostles; since I have shewn that St. *Peter* did not receive any larger commission from our Saviour than the other apostles; and who were so far from giving him any precedence or pre-eminence, that in the council of *Jerusalem*, St. *James* and not St. *Peter*, kept the chair, and presided in that assembly, and gave a definitive sentence in these words, "wherefore my sentence is &c." which indeed sounds like the words of a supreme bishop, and yet St. *James* never assumed this title. And St. *Paul* so far from acknowledging St. *Peter*'s supremacy, "that he withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed for his dissimulation." But surely, if St. *Peter* himself, on whose supposed supremacy the papal claim is grounded, was never owned by the apostles to be supreme; if he deserved, and did actually receive a rebuke from a younger apostle; what becomes of the pope's supremacy, I may add infallibility, who pretend to no greater privileges, than what they derived from an apostle, who never was supreme, nor pretended to be infallible? If we enquire into this title of supreme, we shall find it was not admitted into the *Romish* church, till the seventh century, in the time of *Boniface III*, who obtained this title from the emperor *Phocas*, an adulterer, parricide, and tyrant, that barbarously murdered his lord and benefactor, the christian emperor *Mauritius*, and then ascended his imperial throne. And the better to secure himself in his unjust usurpations, agreed with that pope to own him for the head of the church, if he would acknowledge him for emperor; which was readily agreed to. Thus was the pope's supremacy made the reward of iniquity.

As for the character of infallibility, so arrogantly assumed by the bishops of *Rome*, this has been so often confuted by themselves. that it is amazing to find any advocates for that doctrine. How often has one pope annulled and rescinded all the acts of his predecessors, which must have been ridiculous and profane, had infallibility been annexed to the papal chair? How many popes have been deposed by councils for heresies, and for the most impious lives and practices? Nor does it lessen the objection to lodge infallibility in their councils, and with the pope at their head, because succeeding councils have very often destroyed the acts of the preceding ones. And if neither popes, nor councils, nor both together are infallible, then what becomes of the mighty pretensions and claims of the *Romish* church? What greater advantages do they enjoy in explaining of scriptures, in determining doubts and preventing heresies, than any other church, if she has only the same common assistances that other churches have? And what will she answer at the great tribunal, for that havock, waste, and desolation, for the many millions of poor souls which she has destroyed for not owning her infallibility, and submitting to all her most impious decrees, though expressly contrary to the laws of Christ.

Thus have I traced from the fountain head, the source of *Romish* tyranny and superstition, by which it is evident that church has no supremacy from Christ over other christian churches; that it is an usurped power she has gained over a miserable deluded world; that she has grossly departed from the first institutions of christianity; and that we cannot hold communion with this idolatrous church, but at the greatest danger and hazard. And is it so? And shall we then be so mad as to court slavery, to put about our necks the chains she has so many years laboured to enslave us with? Shall our

almighty and gracious deliverer be at the expence of repeated miracles to save our nation ; and shall we ourselves at last deliver it up to a popish pretender, educated at *Rome*, supported by the powers of *France* and *Spain* ? Is it possible to conceive that a protestant church and nation, can be defended and protected by a popish head, who has been so long dispossessed of what he calls his right ?

Let me seriously ask, whether you are grown so cold and indifferent to the way of God, as to part with it for legends and traditions ? Are you weary of having Christ and his apostles for your guides ? or will you give them up for the inventions of men, and *doctrines of devils* ? Are you desirous to pray *with the understanding*, to have your spirits and affections go along with your lips ? Are you willing to join in the prayers and praises of the whole congregation, and to know what your teachers offer to God, through Christ, in your names ? Do you in earnest hate idolatry, and are desirous to worship the *one* and only true God of heaven and earth ? Or would you rather have a God made of bread, first fall down and worship it as your redeemer, and then eat it ? If you abhor such doctrines and practices, then keep at the greatest distance from that false idolatrous church of *Rome*, which imposes all these wicked abominable rites, that are both hateful to God, and will render your future happiness next to impossible. For as there is no salvation to be expected out of the bosom of the christian church, and that idolatry undoubtedly destroys the very essence and being of a church, it may be much questioned, whether the church of *Rome* be really a part of the christian church or not ?

DISCOURSE XXVII. *Abp. Herring.*

Popery destructive of the civil and religious liberties of men.

Rom. i. 32.

Who, knowing the judgment of God, (that they who commit such things are worthy of death) not only do the same, but have pleasure in those that do them.*

THE apostle in this chapter has given us a most lively description of the state of morality among the *Romans*, in the days of their decline. They were once a very brave and gallant people, famed for the strictness of their moral and public virtue; and though they were in the errors of heathenism, yet they had light enough amongst them, to discern the traces and obligations of natural religion; and, if their practice had been suitable to their knowledge, would have maintained that grandeur, which their integrity first acquired them. But, notwithstanding all their advantages, they sunk by degrees into the very dregs of corruption, and became as infamous and contemned for their vices, as they were once admired and feared for their virtues. This very sad picture of them is drawn by the apostle to the life, and the description in every part of it may be justified from the writings of their own authors.

‘They knew God;’ and indeed many amongst them, had very clear, very excellent notions of

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* Preached at *Kensington* on the fast day, *Jan. 7.*
1747.

the divinity ; but then, ‘ they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful,’ neither their lives nor their worship was suitable to their knowledge ; ‘ but they became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish hearts were darkened ; professing themselves wise they became fools,’ and fell into the most fearful practices of idolatry and immorality. ‘ Wherefore God also gave them up unto uncleanness, unto vile affections, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves,’ (a most prodigious instance of their corrupted hearts ;) ‘ and as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, he in his most just displeasure, gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which were shocking and abominable ; being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity ; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despites, proud boasters, (full of conceit of their own excellencies) inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding,’ (stupid and unmoved, as to every thing that was truly wise and good ;) ‘ covenant-breakers, (no faith nor integrity !) without even natural affection, implacable, unmerciful.’ A melancholy and astonishing description *this*, of that corrupted state ! enough to make the ears of every one that hears it tingle. But this is not all, there is a worse circumstance still behind ; ‘ who knowing the judgment of God, (that they who commit such things, are worthy of death) not only do the same, but have pleasure in those that do them.’ It was not enough, it seems, to sin with an high hand themselves against plain knowledge, and the clear dictates of conscience, but they must propagate their vices, make proselytes to their abominable practices, and place their great pleasure and satisfaction, in making others as bad and corrupted,

as themselves. My observation from the text is this.

That it is the highest aggravation of wickedness, and of all others, the worst symptom in a corrupted nation, to commit iniquity against plain and clear knowledge, and to be eager and studious in its propagation. The apostle here closes the most shocking description that one can imagine, of the immorality of the *Romans*, by this aggravating circumstance, 'that knowing the judgment of God, &c.' now, this I say, and I speak it by St. *Paul's* authority, is wickedness in its highest character and complexion, and one of the worst symptoms that can appear in the body of a corrupted nation. And

First, Because it is the most outrageous insolence, and a sort of defiance of the justice and government of God, and seems to bespeak a very signal and speedy punishment. It is aggravating more than enough, to sin against plain knowledge, and the clear informations of our conscience; and, without any consideration of the power and majesty of God, of the honour of his government, of the authority and reasonableness of his laws, to neglect and despise them; and to violate the sacred obligations of morality, and the repeated injunctions of our blessed saviour, by constant and habitual practice. But to proceed further still in iniquity; 'not only to do these things ourselves, but to have pleasure in those who do them;' to lend our hearts, our hands, and our example to the furtherance of this accursed work: This must certainly in a peculiar manner provoke the displeasure of God, and call down the vengeance of his justice on any people. The honour of his laws, and the majesty of his government require, that so rebellious a spirit should be signally corrected.

It is the methods of God's providence, and perfectly suitable to the justice and goodness of his

nature, in his dealings with the nations of the earth, to try all possible means of bringing them to repentance; by gentle reproof, by instruction, by knowledge, by long-suffering, to awaken sinners to their duty; and when all prove ineffectual, he appeals to man himself, whether punishment is not the proper remedy. “O inhabitants of *Jerusalem*, and men of *Judah*, judge I pray you betwixt me and my vineyard; what could I have done more to my vineyard than I have done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that I should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?” If all the gentle methods of cultivation will not make men better, nothing but punishment can be expected. It shews a most desperate and inveterate spirit of wickedness in a nation, to withstand all the methods of God’s grace, and to grow rather worse by his mercy. If the prophets understood the matter, nothing is a more sure fore-runner of God’s judgments, than such a spirit, as the apostle here reproveth in the *Gentiles*.

Reason, scripture and history agree in this, that there are certain times, when the iniquities of nations are full; when the patience of God has had her perfect work; and when they are ripe for destruction. And assuredly, their time must be drawing on apace, and the measure of their iniquity be greatly increased, who not only practise all the ways of immorality, without restraint, or modesty, or moderation, but “take pleasure in those that do them;” and are delighted with men, that follow their bad examples, and endeavour to diffuse the spirit of wickedness among all around them. But,

Secondly, not to insist upon the judgments of God, which are beyond our knowledge, and thro’ his infinite patience, are not speedily executed against every evil work; I observe further, that such

a spirit of immorality as this, (that is not content with the practice of wickedness itself, but takes pleasure to propagate and diffuse its influence) is one of the surest arguments of a declining nation, and does naturally pave the way to its destruction. The reason of it is perfectly clear; for had God himself never interposed, and our blessed saviour never appeared in the world, to sanctify and encourage goodness, yet it is absolutely impossible for any society to maintain itself, but upon the principles of morality and virtue; and therefore it ought to alarm christians exceedingly, for the honour of God, for the credit of their holy religion, and the common welfare of their country, when they see these important principles contemned and trampled on; and the general bent of a people giving their united vote in favour of vice and wickedness, and with an eager pleasure, encouraging, applauding, and rewarding every attempt to propagate them. What can be expected from such a dangerous disposition as this, when it becomes almost national and general, but that the bands of government must be loosened, all peace and order destroyed, authority and magistracy despised and rendered ineffectual, and the best of men made a prey to the injustice, the violence, the excesses, the lewdness of the worst?

Before the old *Roman* government had its period, the signs of its destruction were long foreseen in the corrupt manners of the people. When the emperor *Augustus* had established the public tranquillity, he was for some time in suspense, whether he should restore the *Romans* to their liberties, or not. But upon mature deliberation, he found the thing impracticable: they were so corrupted by a long civil war, so torn to pieces by inveterate factions, and so licentious in their manners, as to be incapable of being governed by fixed

fixed laws, or restrained in any tolerable order, but by absolute and arbitrary power. It may pass for an invariable truth, in the political survey of nations, that when they are destined to be undone, or lose their liberties, the seeds of their destruction are first seen in the profligate manners of their members; and if so, let any man of goodness and understanding judge, whether we ought not to dread the consequence of that corruption of all kinds, that now so generally prevails amongst us.

If we turn over all the volumes of polity and government; we shall find at last, that it is impossible for any people to maintain their ground, but by supporting the fear and reverence of God, and upholding the majesty of religion; for government can subsist no otherwise, than upon the principles of order, peace, and justice, and of sobriety and temperance in the morals of all its members. We are prodigiously alarmed, when any thing affects our peace, and very studious how to prevent any attempts upon it: as if a rebellion against our government (though in truth, of the most interesting consequence) was of greater moment to us, than such an avowed rebellion against God. Indeed, such a spirit of wickedness as I am speaking of, is an immediate rebellion both against God, and government. For what is government, when the people are taught to be immoral, both by writing and example; when all reverence of God is neglected, the majesty of religion struck at, and its most sacred and affecting sanctions forgot or weakened; when sobriety, frugality, and temperance, are publicly ridiculed and censured, and the lowest of men encouraged, in the imitation of the excesses and lewdness of the highest? I say, when such a spirit of wickedness as this possesses the minds, and actuates a people? What is government?

vernment? Where is the authority of the magistrate? To what purpose do we preach, and do ye believe? Of what importance is it, and how weak will it be to oppose with arguments drawn from reason and scripture, such a torrent as this? To what end is it, to talk of the fear of God, of the authority of our blessed saviour, the excellency of our religion, and the importance of another life? To what purpose do we recommend justice, good nature, industry, contentedness, and a sobriety of life and manners, as the best social virtues, and the very foundation of our present happiness? We may press these things from the pulpit, and they will for the present be heard; but the impression, if any, is made in sand, and the characters wrote in dust, to be blown away with the wind. For, alas! what signify such arguments as these, to people intoxicated with vice, whose natural dispositions are corrupted, whose minds are darkened, whose ears are shut, and whose consciences are seared against all such good and friendly admonitions, by the officious pains, and mischievous example of those, who not only practise the worst immoralities themselves, but “take pleasure in those that do them;” who maintain and cherish this spirit of confusion in its full life and vigour? It is an argument of a very desperate temper in men, and shews that their public virtue is fallen exceeding low, when they appear so cordially in the interest of vice.

Though this generation may not live to see the ruin of our country, yet the loss of our public virtue is an undoubted mark of its approach; and poor posterity may feel the smart of it, and perhaps curse the memory of us their ancestors, for setting such a destructive example in our dispositions, and the conduct of our lives; and this not confined to the lower orders of men, but is what

prevails among those of rank and character. Where the vulgar only is infected, (and this perhaps by their education, business, and conversation) authority, prudence, and instruction may restore them: but how can their manners be reformed, when authority and example join with them, and they can urge the applause and encouragement of the great ones, as a sanction for their worst and most mischievous vices? When men of high characters, of the best education, most improved understandings, and most enlightened knowledge, seem, (as to any regards to virtue and religion) to be upon the level with the lowest and most abandoned, and exactly to entertain the same mean and shameful sentiments with the very dregs of the common people; this, wherever the case happens, is assuredly an instance, that such a people are thoroughly corrupted in their manners. — “Ah! sinful nation! a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers; the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint; from the sole of the foot, even unto the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises, and putrifying sores; a general rottenness and corruption of life and manners.” This was the national character of the *Romans*, drawn by the great apostle of the *Gentiles*; and I would to God I had not too much reason, to make a particular application of it to ourselves, and our own concerns.

But, perhaps some will ask, how can this be applied to us? Is not our public happiness apparent, and as well secured as possible, by the arts of human prudence; our established religion, in profession, wise, reasonable, and truly christian; the constitution of our state admirably calculated for the support of a free and manly government; and the execution of it, in the hands of a good king, by inclination and noble nature, the parent of his country? Are not our people free, our laws wise,

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our property safe, our commerce flourishing, our strength formidable, our riches prodigious? — Now admitting all this to be extremely true; yet still this beautiful structure of our commonwealth, of so goodly outward appearance, may be unsafe in its main foundation; and most certainly is so, if our people are abandoned in their morals, and become the objects of divine displeasure, undeserving of God's good providence, and forsaken by him; for in that dangerous situation, neither the most upright magistrates, nor the best laws, nor the largest supply of wealth, nor the most superior power can long support us. Indeed, under a virtuous administration of things, when religion and integrity have their proper influence, these are the great bulwarks of society: but on the contrary, if men with so many encouragements and opportunities of doing better in their hands, will grow worse and more degenerate in their practices, and like the *Roman* people before referred to, in the pride and fulness of prosperity, will not only do those things which are worthy of death, “but take pleasure in those that do them,” and propagate every vice, by the contagious enchantment of bad examples; these very advantageous circumstances, may become the occasion of more speedy ruin: for wealth, law, and power, in the hands of wickedness, are very dangerous instruments of mischief; the poisonous nature of vice and immorality being such, that they can convert the natural means of health and felicity, both in public and private life, into certain disease and death.

There was indeed a time, when the inhabitants of this famous island had the character of being a sober and virtuous people, and well disposed, to receive so good a religion, as the christian is. But those excellencies seem to be departing from us; our natural tempers are corrupted, and by

imitating none of the best of our neighbours, in some of the worst of their qualities, we seem for some years, to have been running apace, into all the foolish and hurtful vices, which irreligion and vanity, perfidy and unbounded licentiousness can teach us: and that liberty, which rightly treated, is very consistent with true religion, and the public welfare, we most vilely abuse and prostitute, to every dirty purpose of faction and immorality; as if we were studious to shew, that liberty was a blessing too good for us; and that our minds were too low and sordid, to enjoy so gracious and so divine a privilege. In truth, the virtue of our nation is most apparently in a declining state; religion has lost its power upon the heart, and by the most natural consequence, things every day proceed from bad to worse; magistracy is contemned, dignity and order sunk to the common level; adultery and vagrant uncleanness is become an epidemical evil, and by the shameless practice, the good ends of God's institution are defeated, the numbers of the people are diminished, opulent and noble families undone, our children are ungovernable, our servants extravagant, idle and unfaithful; intemperance, as habitual as general, debilitates and spoils the strain of the people; the public peace is disquieted, daily robberies interrupt the repose of both city, and country; and to the shame of government, murder itself is frequently committed in the streets of our capital; almost under the seat and throne of magistracy.—But thus it will be in defiance of laws, and the sword of justice, till we seriously begin a reformation, every man upon himself and in his own house; and increase the power, support the majesty of true religion, preserve the order and dignity of social life, and lay the foundation of better times, in the prudent education of our children, and the wise government of our servants. And with
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regard to our christianity, and the awful interests dependant on it; we must either mend our manners, or our very profession of it will become a jest. We sometimes value ourselves upon our religion, as protestants reformed from the errors of a corrupted church. This is well; but whatever errors we have forsaken, if we do not amend our lives, our worst errors will still remain; and except the persecuting zeal of papish piety, a sober and regular, though weak and deluded *Romanist*, is a character very preferable, to a loose and immoral *protestant*, in all the pride of his liberty and knowledge.

God alone determines the fate of nations; who destroyes or preserves them, according to his good providence. But his immediate interposition apart, reason, revelation, and experience confirm this truth to us, that public virtue is public prosperity, but ruin is inseparably annexed to vice; and therefore if we would, under God, preserve our country, and deliver our religion and laws in safety to posterity, we must set about the work by a serious and sincere reformation; compared to this, the arts of human policy, and the counsels of princes are weak and short-sighted, and the execution of the best concerted schemes, most precarious and uncertain; but the public virtue of a nation, blessed by the providence of God, is strength invincible, and wisdom not to be controuled.

Religion is much the subject of our enquiry and conversation; let it reach and animate the heart, as well as exercise the tongue and understanding. Nothing shews so much the wisdom of a man, in every circumstance of life, from him that weareth purple and a crown, to him that is clothed with a linen frock, as a rectitude of life and manners; and after all our boasting of love and regard
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to our country, he is the best citizen, who is the best man, both in his public and private character.

To this care of our moral and christian conduct, let us add a wise and well-governed zeal for our government; let us study the value of our laws; let us remember how much blood and treasure they cost our forefathers, to gain and preserve them to us their children; and let us hold them fast against every attempt of tyranny and absolute dominion. We have a watchful and envious neighbour near us, who, for some years not content with impoverishing his own country, and sacrificing the lives of his subjects, to a wanton lawless ambition, is meditating the same chains for *Europe*. And such is his perfidy and shameful breach of treaties, as not to be paralleled in ancient story, not even in the annals of his own predecessors. We, though at a distance, have a feeling evidence of this, in the calamities which this domineering power has occasioned around him. What a profusion of treasure! what a frightful waste of innocent men's lives! what an hated form of government, where the caprice and ambition of one puny man, shall desolate and depopulate whole countries! Let this reflection, this painful feeling, teach us the value of our own constitution. Let us hold it fast till we die, and guard against every attempt to destroy it, whether made by open force, or the slower, but more effectual methods of deceit and corruption. We may be afraid of the very commerce and correspondence with such a nation, as we are now speaking of. There is perhaps greater danger in it, than from their enmity. The vanity, the looseness, the perfidy, the libertinism, the abject and fawning manners of the people, are good for nothing, but to spoil the spirits of men, and by breaking them gradually, make them at last submit to an unmanly government; and it behoves

us to look well about us, that our connections with them, do not debauch and hurt us. — Connections, which of late years, have insensibly gained ground upon us, arising either from the expensive and idle curiosity of travel, or from the correspondence of a trade, hurtful to us, but a rich mine to them; or from retaining in our families, servants of that country and religion, to the unkind, and undeserved reproach of our own people; or from a slavish fondness for their language, or a love to their fantastic fashions; all unbecoming the freedom and grandeur of the *British* nation. — But whatever be the reason of our attachments, it is extremely necessary to break loose from them, especially as we see ourselves surrounded with faithless and domestic enemies, who, for their own shameless purposes, are lavish in the praises of this people; who study to conciliate our minds to them, to introduce their scheme of government, and supported by their infamous alliance, to distress, harass, weaken, and try every method to enslave their own free and happy country. — Despotic government, founded in hereditary right, where one man's will is every man's misery, is not more mischievous in its fatal consequences, than it is absurd and ridiculous in itself. There is reason, spirit, and liberty in law, and which are absolutely essential to every man's property, because without it, there can be no such thing as virtue or religion in the world.

If our constitution is so valuable, how much more is our religion? And how inseparable is that, and the happiness of our country? I speak of it now chiefly in opposition to popery; the strange and alarming encrease of which is our greatest and most immediate danger. No nation can be truly happy and flourishing under popery; because the influence of it is of so baneful a nature, that it
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does not only sink the spirits of men, damp the vigour and life of industry, stop every avenue to religious knowledge from the scriptures, makes princes tyrants, and their people slaves; but it in a manner countermines the wisdom and goodness of providence, and hath in fact converted the most beautiful and fertile countries into desolate wildernesses. If therefore we would recover our ancient character, of being a sober, good-natured, and religious people, let it be our principal care to avoid the contagion of this absurd, mischievous, and unchristian religion; for popery, as a fine writer expresses it, "is really an usurpation upon christianity; and like usurpers, lives within its guards, inquisitors, and dragoons; it settles and supports itself by gibbets, axes, halters, fire and sword, and all the instruments of death and cruel execution."

Whatever sense we have of liberty, whatever just notion of religion, whatever is left of the spirit of christianity among us, we have it from an establishment founded upon scripture, and the purest ages, maintained in a spirit of charity and toleration; but if we suffer ourselves to be ensnared by popery, and submit to its cruel and imperious dictates, the dye is cast, and we may easily be undone, beyond redemption. Nothing therefore imports us more, than to watch the workings of these bold, insinuating people, the *Romish* missionaries. How long shall we bear with these unquiet and meddling spirits, who are not only troublesome, but dangerous and pernicious to us? Whose business it is, to delude silly women, draw away the children of the nation, or taint their first principles; to captivate the poor by their impertinent and venal charity, seduce the profligate with fallacious promises of heaven, by virtue of their foolish relics, and the intercession of such saints, as either never existed, or deserved to be the scorn
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and scandal of the times they lived in. Is there to be no end of their avarice and thirst of power? Must this free and wealthy nation submit for ever to have its peace interrupted and endangered, its treasures drained, and its subjects debauched from their natural allegiance, by these foreign plunderers, these sons of darkness, who lurk in the thievish corners of the streets, putting on every garb and character to work their infernal purposes; braving our laws and magistrates, and in their gloomy midnight cabals, contriving schemes of most destructive treason. These pestilent people *are about our houses, and about our bed, and spy out all our ways*; they enter into our most inmost recesses, and like the plague described by *Moses*, *they go up and come into our houses, and into our bedchambers, and upon our beds, and into the houses of our servants, and upon our people*, and in different disguises overspread the face of the camp, the city, and the country.

The religion, which these people are so studious to propagate, considered merely as such, is both base and absurd; and deserves the scorn and contempt of protestants; but what makes it the terror of all good men, the hatred of all wise and humane princes, the misery of every country where it is established, is, that furious spirit of cruelty, which is inseparably blended and wrought into the *Roman* polity, and distinguishes the papal government from all others. A government thus supported by torture and inquisition, is plan'd for and subsists by the misery and destruction of men, and is a settled and habitual conspiracy against all the princes of the world.

— This was the opinion of our wise fore-fathers, this they severely felt, and is what we in some degree experience, and by this our neighbour protestants suffer daily. And yet by some fascination, we seem inclined to believe, that popery is become a mild, good-natured thing; nay, some of us, even
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apologize for it, and plead for its toleration; tho' every native of *England*, who is lifted into this detestable society and mission, is a rebel to his country's laws, and a traitor to our excellent king.

If the popish missionaries continue to be as successful in this deluded country, as they are at present, it may be looked upon as the last, the most avenging scourge of heaven; the chastisement of a people, who have filled up the measure of their iniquity. But this judgment suspended, if our public virtue decays, we may recover it. If commotions arise at home, wisdom and moderation of government may reduce things into order. If our constitution is corrupted, our legislature can redress and mend it. But if popery once more lords it over us, there is an end of our nation, of our honour, our freedom, our prosperity, our virtue; and it will be a happy circumstance, if our name too be extinguished.

Lastly, let us remember, that next under God, union at home, and loyalty and affection to the king and his royal family, are our great and sure defence. We have seen, God be thanked, that danger at a perilous crisis can unite us, and our union save us; and why should not our common interest at all times do the same? We are brethren by blood, by country, by religion; why then do we strive one against another, and by our foolish divisions, open the door to an enemy, that we are more than a match for, when united? The main strength of our neighbour nation is in their union, whether it arises from the power and policy of the court, or the affections of the subjects; on the other hand, our division is our weakness. To see a people blessed beyond a parallel with the best climate, the safest situation, the most extensive profitable commerce, the wisest laws, the best natured principles, and the establishment of a divine religion; sacrific

ficing all these advantages to, or endangering them by the little resentments of party, the narrow, ungenerous views of pride, ambition, and private avarice. What strange folly and inconstancy is this! The want of union does not only expose us to the wicked attempts of that powerful, restless, and intriguing nation, but even to their scorn and derision. And will no history, no experience make us wiser? Has not this very mischief ruined many great and mighty nations? Our saviour assures us, that an "house divided against itself, cannot stand." It is this misconduct, that has weakned our national power, for a long series of years, and brought us more than once, within our memories, upon the brink of destruction. Our enemies indeed, were lately mistaken in their opinion of us; they found us united, when they expected a civil war; but what mischief have we brought upon ourselves, by giving them room and occasion for such foolish presumption? But they are now convinced, that the king has the hearts of his subjects; his royal goodness gives them a title to them, and will preserve them loyal to the last period of his life. He enjoys his crown by clear and indisputable inheritance, by the sanction of laws, by the consent and with the applause of a great nation; and uses his power and royalty, as becomes a king, that has at heart the public good. Under his shadow we may sit down safely; and if we are not wanting in our duty to God, if we preserve integrity of manners, love, honour, and practise our holy religion, support our free and legal government, shut the door against the arts and force of popery, and put a speedy end to those hateful divisions, which spoil the comfort of our lives, defeat us of the enjoyment of all our natural advantages, and tend directly to our dissolution: If we do all this in
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time, we shall be as happy as this world can make men; and our government will be as free, independent, and impregnable, as the God of nature has made the situation of our island.

DISCOURSE XXVIII. Dr. Sykes.

The church of *Rome* founded on policy ; and shewing, that a popish prince is incapable of governing a protestant nation.

Psalms 35. 20.

For they speak not peace ; but they devise deceitful matters, against them that are quiet in the land.

THIS passage of the *Psalmist*, by reason of some different readings of the original, is several ways translated ; but each of them represents to us, the deceit, the malice, the private as well as public enmity, which *David's* enemies harboured in their breasts. It is much at one, as to the effects and consequences, whether “ they speak peace ” to him, as some read it, or *speak not peace*, as others read it ; whilst they “ devise deceitful things ” against him, and such as would live in peaceable subjection to him. The only difference is, that the open enemy is easily guarded against ; a man knows his adversary, and his designs, and what he must expect ; he sees the danger and may provide against it ; whilst those who “ devise deceitful things,” and attempt to gain their points by secret conspiracies, under the cover of friendship

ship or submission, are unsuspected of mischief, and securely deal about destruction, under the pretence or mask of affection. My present design is to consider distinctly the principles and practices of those disturbers of our peace*, “who devise deceitful matters, against them that are quiet in the land.” Indeed,

It cannot be expected, that a protestant nation should enjoy an unmolested peace from those, whose avowed principles are such, as to be absolutely inconsistent with its safety; wherever the policy of any people is utterly irreconcilable to their neighbours quiet, it is a wonder, that they are permitted to enjoy peace, not that they are disturbed; and if we survey those principles of the *papists*, which they constantly maintain, and diligently instil into all their converts, we must ever expect from them the daring enterprizes of an open, as well as the more crafty and subtle stratagems of a private enemy; of one resolved by any means to obtain his ends. The policy of *Rome* is plainly supported by, and founded upon the pretence of religion; and under the form of directing the consciences of men, has assumed a title to the monarchy of the christian world, and by degrees usurped a power over their minds, persons, and possessions.

It is not my design at present, to examine the truth of any of their principles; nor to shew, that there is not one word in scripture, from whence it can be inferred, that any of those extravagant powers they pretend to, belong to the *pope* or church of *Rome*. But I shall consider their exorbitant claims in a political view, and now only observe, that their practices are exact, consistent, and regular, and what all may naturally expect from such everlasting sources of confusion.

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* Preached on Nov. 5.

Every principle, upon which that mighty fabrick is erected, is so contrived, that it supports at the same time, both a temporal greatness, and a "kingdom which is not of this world." It advances and promotes a worldly interest and power, under the name of christianity; and "by a slight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive," godliness is made the cover for grandeur, and the salvation of souls for riches and pomp. Were the advancement of power the only point in view, the wit of man could never invent a more promising contrivance, than this mixture of *civil* and *spiritual* authority. The blending them together, and thereby making one *ecclesiastico-civil* power, enables the person invested therewith, to act in any capacity, as best suits his interest; and by having either the *civil* or *spiritual* power, as occasion requires, subservient each to the other, he has always the highest probability of success. Upon this foundation is erected all the spiritual tyranny of *Rome*; and its monarchy, by a strange, but dextrous management, is extended over many of the subjects of all the princes of *Europe*: For by laying hold of their consciences, and tying them up to an implicit obedience, they are brought more readily to submit to, and execute the commands of their spiritual directors, than the subjects of any temporal princes can be; and this for the following reasons.

First, The church of *Rome* pretends to be the catholic church of Christ, the ground and pillar of truth, out of whose communion there can be no salvation. The end of this pretence, can only be to encrease the number of papal subjects, to force them to a blind submission, and terrify them from renouncing their obedience, by excluding them from salvation, if ever they depart from that communion. *Secondly*, when the pope pretends to be the
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only fixed and authorised interpreter of scripture, this is to keep up a certain dependence on him, and prevent an inquiry after truth, and the will of God. And from the pretence of his being Christ's vicegerent, it is inferred, that all whom he admits into heaven, are admitted; "whose sins soever he remits, they are remitted; and whose sins soever he retains, they are retained in heaven;" to whom soever therefore he grants his pardons and indulgencies, they are pardoned by God for all their crimes; and whomsoever he excommunicates, they lose all pretensions to, and hopes of God's pardon. What can be the end of this enormous power, but to have the pope and every priest deemed as much superior to the princes of the earth, as the soul is superior to the body, or the joys of heaven, to the imperfect transitory pleasures of the earth? *Thirdly*, when the charge of heresy or schism is denounced against all who separate from the church of *Rome*, and heresy is represented in such a detestable light, and the *inquisition* is so dreadful, the design of this, is to keep their votaries in awe, and oblige them to submit to their authority; and thus, in consequence of the pope's supremacy, all those papists who live under the protection and laws of other princes, pay the obedience of conscience to him. His interest and power are the only centre to which all their actions tend; because, if he can exclude from, or admit to heaven, all whom he pleases, by this means he can enervate the authority of princes, weaken their hands, make their subjects rebel, instead of assisting them, and work what destruction he will. *Fourthly*, the belief that Christ has made the pope his vicegerent, and that in matters of faith, he cannot err; what is the consequence of this, but that he can say, "to one, go, and he goeth; to another come, and he cometh; and

to his servant, do this, and he doth it? He can command an implicit obedience to his authority; and by reigning in the hearts of another man's subjects, he will always be master of their affections. The man therefore that claims this eminent prerogative, "to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy any nation and kingdom," his votaries, animated by such denunciation, will naturally enter into such measures, as may best accomplish his ends. *Lastly*, since all are deemed heretics, who renounce the communion of that church, and that the infallible judge proclaims it to be an act of merit, to suppress and destroy such wolves, as he calls the opposers of his power; from hence are implanted in the minds of men, the seeds of everlasting hatred and aversion, and the fruits of them may naturally be expected. For when once it is a condition of God's favour, to distress or destroy those who are represented as his enemies, then to fix the opprobrious term upon any one, is to mark him out for destruction; and accomplish it, is to ensure the reward of heaven.

These are the practices which naturally follow from these principles; and experience informs us, what persecutions, what massacres, what tortures this man of sin has sanctified, in order to destroy those his enemies, "who would not that he should reign over them?" Is there any thing so barbarous and cruel, so scandalous and wicked, that has not been attempted, under a pretence of extirpating heresy? This kingdom has been often interdicted, the people absolved from their oath of allegiance, excommunicated, and delivered over to *satan*; and given up as a prey to their neighbours, all the engines of human terrors having been set on work, to accomplish a submission to the *Romish* yoke. When these vain arts and human denunciations of God's wrath failed them,

and proved ineffectual, as they always will; what a daring attempt did they make * [as on this day] to destroy at one blow the royal family, the nobility, and the representatives of this nation; and to have turned the land into a field of blood? They have consecrated the very weapons that were to stab princes, absolved the wretches that were to use them, blessed their designs of fraud and violence, and even sainted the men who lost their lives to advance the papal power. No arts have been left unattempted to promote this enormous tyranny; neither the terrors of violence to weak princes, nor the delusion of flattery to ambitious ones; neither civility nor dissimulation, promises nor threats, the assurance of heaven, nor the pains of hell, have been wanting to allure or frighten men into their interest; no law of God so sacred, the breach of which they have not dispensed with, or connived at, if it tended to promote or perpetuate their power and influence. As experience teaches us all this, and we can trace the fountains from whence these bitter waters flow; it is in vain to look for peace to our church and state, from these avowed enemies to both. We must hope for times when causes shall not produce their natural effects, if we expect that men of these principles and practices, will not “devise deceitful matters, against them that are quiet in the land.”

Another sort of men, who act thus deceitfully, are those, who, though they deny the papal supremacy, and protest against those wicked arts, by which it is supported; yet would attempt to set upon our throne a person educated in popish principles, whose title, if he ever had any, our laws have quite annulled; and whose right to govern us, our whole constitution disclaims. This is an

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* On the 5th of Nov. 1722.

intestine evil, which must necessarily entail disturbance on us; and whether they succeed or not, such as have any regard to the good of their country, to the enjoyment of their liberties, to the happiness of our constitution, to their religion, to their consciences, or to any thing that is valuable to a free people, must expect from these men frequent interruptions of their quiet, until the spirit of faction can be broken, and by a steady administration of affairs, it is put out of their power to rebel.

The disadvantages of having a popish prince to govern a protestant country are so self-evident, that no real protestant can possibly expect happiness under such an administration; and yet so it is, that by the arts and industry of some *disappointed* men, innumerable people have been practised upon, and made to think, that there can be no safety to this church and state, but from a professed, bigotted papist; no right to the throne, but what necessarily leads us to, and terminates in, an enemy by principle to all *protestantism*. Unhappy people! not to perceive the obvious consequences of their actions! and that whilst they think to secure to themselves riches and greatness, or perhaps to be revenged on their enemies, they subvert the liberty, the property, the security of the people; and invest one with power, who is obliged to act contrary to the real ends for which all power is granted to princes.

But since we find that men can be brought to think thus; let us imagine that these enemies of our peace were able to execute their designs; what must be the consequence, but massacring and plundering, fire and sword, the seizure of properties, the ruin of families, devastation of the country, and all the horrid train of an intestine war; nothing but misery and destruction, can attend

tend the contest for the crown ; nor can their point be carried, but by ruined cities, and depopulated towns. As the scene must thus naturally open, what compensation can be made for all this misery ? What one good thing will the nation enjoy, or what one evil will it be rid of, as an equivalent for all the havock which must be made ? Will there be a greater plenty of things at home ? or our interest abroad be more advanced ? Will the public debts be sooner paid, or the properties of the people vested in the public be rendred more secure ? or what can be the equivalent to a civil war, where all sides and parties must expect ruin, and that a “ man’s foes are those of his own household.”

But, let us suppose the pretender quietly possessed of the throne, the war at an end, the sword sheathed, and every thing in peace ; yet it is impossible to hope for, or expect the preservation of our constitution, and the continuance of our happiness under his administration. Is it possible to hope or wish, that a prince brought up with all the prejudices of arbitrary government, full of resentments for injuries supposed to be done here, and under the highest obligations to all our known enemies ; I say, can we have the least colour of reason to imagine, that such a prince could be persuaded to indulge that liberty, which the *British* nation justly values itself upon ? Liberty is the greatest blessing man enjoys on earth. It sweetens all his toil and pains, and makes easy his daily labours. It encourages him chearfully to undergo the hardest fatigues, being sensible that he works for himself, who will reap the fruits of his own industry. But upon what foundation must our hopes be raised, that our liberty shall be preserved, when force must supersede our laws, to bring in the pretender, and keep him on the throne ? It is true, there must be laws in arbitrary governments ; there must

be rules of action for the subject; and there must be judges to execute them, between contending parties: but whilst the prince has an absolute power in his own hands, superior to the law, that must give way to his ambition, humour, and inclination; what security then can there be against these evils, when power and resentment are united; and when an armed force must justify the seizure of the funds, *what will the end of these things be?*

But as we regard our civil constitution as *Britons*, and should be always jealous of our civil liberties; so as christians we ought to value our religious rights, "and to stand fast in that liberty, wherewith Christ has made us free." We see the blessing of a government, where a free enquiry into truth is permitted; where liberty of prophesying is allowed; where a toleration is happily granted; where reason spreads its banner, and triumphs over superstitious folly. We enjoy that right, the suppression of which would in its consequences have heretofore prevented the growth of christianity, and without which neither *Jews* nor *Gentiles* could have been made converts to Christ. When the tyranny of *Rome* had universally prevailed, without this right all reformation must have been precluded. And if a time should ever hereafter happen, when error and force being united shall gain the ascendant, then without this right, there will be no opposing its growth. This as christians and consistent protestants, we all contend for; and how much soever some may fear the consequences of private judgment, of reason, and enquiries, yet none have any just cause for fear, but only those, whose notions and practices will not bear the light. As christians, then, we claim a right "to search the scriptures, to try all things, to hold fast that which is good." As men, we claim the use of reason; as protestants, the right to

to judge for ourselves. But can we expect the enjoyment of these great and invaluable privileges, should a popish bigot ever govern this nation, who will deprive the people of what is the essential right of christians, the free use of the scriptures, and hinder them from a free examination of their meaning; and the most palpable contradiction to our senses, will be made the great article of our belief: our reason, which we claim as men, must of course be discarded, and instead of judging for ourselves, the right of every protestant, a blind submission to authority, will be required of us. *Authority!* that artful cover of ignorance, which under the name and pretence of peace, has introduced and kept up in the church of Christ infinite errors and superstition; and whenever the least glimmerings of light began to drawn, or any truth to be taught, it was *authority* that stifled it, till ignorance and stupidity by degrees grew to so stupendous a bulk, that it even sunk under its own weight. Are such things as these so much to be desired, that any among us should strive to place on our throne, the very man that can and must accomplish it?

To convert a single person to the *Romish* church, is esteemed by papists, to be a meritorious act; and therefore they “compass sea and land to gain a proselyte;” and like the *Pharisees* of old, when they have him, “make him twofold more a child of hell, than themselves.” What an excess then of merit must it be, “to bring back a nation to the bosom of the *Roman* church, and to be the deliverer and restorer of the ancient paternal religion of *Great Britain* *?” They are taught to think, that there can be no greater blessing on earth, than to subdue that monster *heresy*; by which pa-

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* The pope's letter to prince *Charles*, when he was in *Spain*.

pists mean all opposition to holy church, an evil with them much greater than immorality. And whilst the rewards of heaven, and the blessings of earth, such as man can bestow, are made the bait and incitement to this work, can any one imagine, that a *bigot* will forego this merit, and lose the opportunity of insuring heaven? If once he is able to subdue the kingdom, and gain the throne, will it not then be easy for him to finish the good work, and make all opposition fall before him? Can he better pay the debt of gratitude, or make more suitable returns to those, who have so long supported him, than by exerting himself to subvert the strongest bulwark against popery? This will be the end of this godly cause.

We have among us a set of *protestants*, as they like to call themselves, who, through pride, ambition, or revenge, join with their known professed enemies, to involve this kingdom in blood and confusion. To accomplish their designs, they embark in a cause, that must naturally and obviously destroy our liberties, subvert our religion; and without an immediate interposition of providence, must extinguish all that is desirable to a free and understanding people. What will not malice, revenge, and disappointment hurry ambitious minds to? But can such think to bring this about in peace and quietness; or to maintain their cause, without the usual confusion attending such designs? No; we know they have actually *proposed massacres*, pitched upon resolute hearts and hands, to go through the blessed work of *blood*. They have designed to embarrass the nation, to confound and destroy, by seizing to themselves the properties of millions. This was necessary to complete the end they had in view; and supposing the event ever to succeed, must bring upon us all the evils, which superstition and ty-

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ranny can introduce. Surely, we may say of these men, "O my soul, come not thou into their secret, unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united: cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath for it was cruel. *Gen. 49. 5, 6, 7.*" Enough I hope has been said, to shew the mischievous designs of the enemies of our peace, and from whom no security can be expected:

As the providence of God has hitherto preserved his present majesty, and very remarkably disappointed the hopes and designs of the pretender and his abettors; it is our duty to consult his peace and safety, if it be only to secure our own. The way to make a people happy in a king, is to endeavour to make him happy in his people. When once designs for the honour, welfare, and security of a nation, are by wicked surmises, and groundless jealousies, either disappointed, or artfully misrepresented; when the necessary precautions for the public are set in a most odious light, and the people are told, *they are only steps to tyranny*; when conspirators and their friends shall insinuate danger to the state, from the only measures that can disappoint the designs of its enemies; when the wheels of government are thus clogged and embarrassed, they alone can rejoice, who move the springs, and lie concealed, in order to triumph in our folly and ruin; whilst such base insinuations, cannot fail of raising very gloomy and melancholy reflections in the minds of all true protestants.

It is certainly all our interests, if we do but rightly consider, to make the crown on our sovereign's head, as easy as we possibly can. We are blessed with a king, in himself, the best disposed to make this nation happy; and we have all reason to expect the fruits of wisdom, justice, clemency, constancy and courage. But if we abuse these privileges, strive to make him uneasy, and carry on

the work of his and our enemies, we must then expect to hear of decay, of leading into captivity, and great complaining in our streets.

May we therefore become truly sensible of the happiness and blessings which we enjoy ; whether ignorant or ill designing people will value them or not. A blessing to a nation is not less so, though foolish people despise, and in the wickedness of their hearts oppose it, or wish its absence. If the protestant religion be a blessing, the protestant succession must be so too. May God in his mercy continue both to us ! may he protect our royal family, on which the happiness of these nations depends ! may he guard them from all secret conspiracies and open attempts ! may he direct and influence all their counsels, to the advancement of his glory, the good of his church, the safety and welfare of these kingdoms ! may the administration be *steady* ! *steady* in opposing the enemies of our peace ! *steady* in the cause of liberty ! *steady* in promoting the public welfare ! and may the people understand the things which *belong to their peace*, before it be too late ; that all the earth may see the salvation of the Lord !

DISCOURSE XXIX. Dr. Burnet.

The lawfulness of the revolution demonstrated.

Rom. 13. 5.

Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.

THE apostle here gives us a general command for subjection to all higher powers; and as he imposes it as a duty upon all mankind, on every soul of what distinction or denomination soever, whether clergy or laity, bond or free; so he does it for such reasons, as are equally obliging to all. He presses it upon us first, from the original of government, as deriving its authority from God, and expressly declares, all power to be of God; and that even the then ruling heathen powers, were ordained of God, and therefore whoever opposes the higher powers must necessarily oppose the ordinance; and become liable to the vengeance of God. And this he urges from the end of government, which is ordained by God, for the good of mankind, in the encouragement of virtue, and the praise of them who do well; and the discouragement of vice, in the execution of wrath, upon them that do evil. From whence he draws the conclusion in the text, *wherefore*, or considering these things, *ye must needs be subject*, and live in due obedience to the higher powers, not only for fear of the wrath they execute, but from a sense of your duty to God and man, as they are God's ministers for the good of the world. In discoursing on these words, it will be proper, *first to shew*, in what sense it is, that

government is God's ordinance, and who those powers are, that are truly ordained of God. *Secondly*, what that subjection is, which arises from this ordinance, and is the duty of every soul to pay to those higher powers.

That government is the ordinance of God, was a received opinion long before the apostle lived; it is asserted as a maxim among the heathens, in their most ancient books. But how they came by it, whether by the tradition of some early revelation, or from the dictates of their own reason, we do not certainly know; the latter seems to be most probable, because there could be no necessity of an extraordinary revelation, for what lay so obvious to common reason, in the nature and reason of things. For as an absolutely perfect being, could make the world for no other end but his creatures happiness, he has thereby given them a natural right to every thing necessary to that end; and as mankind are by nature sociable creatures, and cannot subsist without society, therefore so far as government is necessary to society, so far they have a natural right and obligation to it, as a proper means, in the nature of things, to attain the end for which God made them. The necessity of certain actions to attain a necessary end appointed by God, being as clear a declaration of his will concerning such actions, as if he had revealed it to us; and that coercive government is necessary to the happiness of society in the present state of things, no wise man can deny. Indeed, had mankind continued in that primitive state in which it was originally created by God, probably there would have been no such thing; because, as our nature was then pure and perfect, with all its lower faculties in an absolute subjection to right reason, we may naturally suppose, that had we continued so, reason would have been

our only guide, and all other governments useless and unnecessary, in regard our faculties would have obeyed whatever reason directed. But in the state we are now, our reason alone is not sufficient; our understandings are become dark and feeble, our passions strong and boisterous, and our "members war against the mind," so that without some external rule to guide, some stronger power to influence and restrain us, the world would become a wilderness, and mankind be like beasts, in a continual warfare, biting and devouring one another. And we could not be sure, even of the necessities of life, any longer than we had strength to defend ourselves against the insults and invasions of others. Government therefore is so manifestly necessary to the well being of mankind, as sociable creatures, that there is no possibility of any measure of happiness without it. And since it is also a very proper means to attain the end appointed by God, in the nature of things, it must be so far esteemed the ordinance of God. Thus much is evident in favour of the divine authority of government in general, and the same reason will hold,

Secondly, for the like authority of all particular governments; for if it be the will and ordinance of God, that there should be government; and if he has given mankind a right to it, as the necessary means of their happiness, we may reasonably suppose, he has given them an equal right to all things necessary to government, in order to effect that end. And since without laws there can be no government, nor they be of any use, without a suitable power to enforce, and proper persons to execute them; he has by consequence given every society a right and power to provide for this, where he himself has not done it. The *Jews* were the only nation for whom God did this; and he left all the rest of the world at liberty to judge and act for them.

themselves, and consequently to establish such forms and models of government, to appoint such governors, make such laws, annex such penalties, and provide such methods for the execution of them, as they should think necessary. So that mankind from a natural sense of this, have linked themselves into different bodies, under different terms and regulations, according to their different circumstances. And though the ordinances of men, and the rights and powers arising from them; are only the appointments of men; yet as these are made by the general power that all mankind have from God, they are so far to be esteemed the ordinances and appointments of God: and consequently the laws they make by virtue of this power, must be looked on as God's laws; their governors as God's ministers; their authority as God's.

The same principle will direct us in forming our notions of the authority of all changes and alterations of government, that may happen in particular societies, where and how far they are the ordinances of God. For since the end and reason of all government and its different forms are the happiness of the world; and since mankind will always have a right to consult their own happiness, it will follow that they can be no longer bound to these forms, than they shall find them conducive to that end: and as the necessities of mankind alter with their circumstances, they will always have a right to make such alterations, as the necessity of their different circumstances shall require. And though ordinarily this ought not to be done, but by those persons, and in that manner, as is appointed by their respective constitutions; yet if it shall happen, that those rules cannot be observed, nor that form of government be preserved, without the utter ruin of the whole society; there can be no doubt but all societies have a right to provide for their happiness,

in any other manner that they see fit, even against their own stated rules and constitutions. For as all forms of government are only means to an end, if these cannot be preserved without destroying the end, that must not be lost for the sake of the means; but on the contrary, there is the same reason and the same natural right to alter them, as there was at first to make them.

And therefore in the case of successful rebellions, or conquests by a foreign enemy, which last frequently happens in frontier towns; should the prevailing power impose a new governor, or settle a new form of government to which the whole society are required to submit on pain of death, or forfeiture of their estates and liberties; as it is evident they cannot refuse to comply, but with their utter ruin and destruction; so if they have a right to consult their own happiness, they have an equal right to comply with these terms, as an absolute necessary means to their happiness. And though God cannot be supposed to authorise or approve those wicked means, by which such changes are usually brought about, yet he authorises all societies to provide for their own happiness; and when this cannot be done without submitting to their conquerors, and such changes of government as they impose, they are thereby authorised to submit to them: and whatever new government is settled by that submission, must from thence be esteemed the ordinance of God.

And that possession is the only right asserted by the apostle, we have his authority in the text; for this was the case of the ruling powers under which he lived, and to which he requires subjection. Every one knows, that the *Roman* empire as it then stood was a sort of conquest, as being a total subversion of the ancient constitution of the republic, imposed upon the people by an arbitrary and illegal power;

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it began in the usurpation of a subject, and was supported by a conquering army; and as it continued only by the same power that first set it up, so it was submitted to out of mere necessity. But yet it was the then settled government, and is here called the ordinance of God, and they who executed it, the ministers of God. The apostle no doubt knew how they came by their power; but this was not his, or the subject's concern. The usurpers were to answer to God for that. The subjects business was with the authority, and the persons vested with it; which as it is the ordinance of God, and the persons executing it the ministers of God, as such, they are of necessity to be submitted to.

And if such a possession as this was not right, it would be to no purpose to command subjection to governors, or to enjoin us as the apostle does, "to pray for kings and all that are in authority, that we may lead quiet and peaceable lives, in all godliness and honesty." For if we were left at liberty to dispute prince's titles, and withhold our obedience, till such pretences shall be settled, this would open a gap to everlasting contention, and ruin all the peace of the world. Artful and designing men will never want matter for dispute on this head, and there will be always people, who through disaffection or disappointment, avarice or ambition, will be ready to fall in with such pretences, as being their interest to introduce confusion. Besides, the rights of princes are very often hard to be determined, as depending upon history and law, and the particular constitution of their respective governments. And even where we know well the constitution of any society, the question is, whether there can be any rule so unalterable, as that no emergency, or necessity can supercede it? Certain it is from the nature of things, that there can be no such rule in government, all societies having a right to consult
 them

their own happiness, as the necessity of their affairs shall require. And as all governments in the world have suffered changes, and their constitutions have been altered one time or other; if no persons can have any right to govern, and by consequence to be obeyed, but where the original constitution has not been altered, there neither is, nor can be any such as a rightful governor in the world; nor can there be any subjection due. Length of possession will not give a right, where the first possession could give none; for the nature of things is not alterable by time, and time will not make that right, which is in its own nature wrong.

So that according to the notion of an indefeasible right, wherever any usurpation has once taken place though many thousand years since; the government of that society is thenceforth entirely dissolved, and all acts of authority and judgment are null and void, and every one has a right to do as he pleases, as having no legal power to controul him; but this is such an absurdity as no one of common sense can admit to be true. This being a point of great importance, it is very necessary to have it rightly understood; for not long since, the pretence of an indefeasible right on the one hand, and a defective title on the other, was made a handle for rebellion; whereas there is nothing more absurd in reason, nor nothing more contrary to scripture, since the apostle commanded subjection to the then ruling powers in his time, who had no other right to the government, but a possession obtained by force and usurpation.

And if possession was a sufficient title to subjection in them, it must be so in all the ruling powers in the world; for as all governments have been changed one time or other, possession can be the only foundation upon which all governments in the world must stand. So that the doctrine of the
text

text is truly this, that all government is of God, all power and authority being derived from him. And as he who in any society is invested with this authority, is God's minister, so the ruling king is God's king: He is "the *Cæsar* to whom we must render the things that are *Cæsar's*," whoever he be, and by whatever means he came by his authority. For as obedience is here declared to be due to God's authority, in whose hands soever it be lodged; so, by consequence God has given every one a right to this obedience, to whom he has given this authority. And since he who has God's right to obedience, has the only right, because the ruling king has God's right, therefore he only is to be obeyed for conscience sake. Thus have I shewn, how, and in what sense, government may be said to be God's ordinance, and who those higher powers are, that are truly ordained of God.

The next thing to be enquired into is, the nature of that subjection which every soul is required to pay to these higher powers. This subject has occasioned great dispute, it being a difficult point; and the most easy way to settle it, will be to reduce what has been said, into certain maxims or principles. First then it appears that government and subjection are relative terms, and that wherever government is, there subjection is due. *Secondly*, it is certain that as all power is of God, and all subjection is due to the divine power, so no governor can have any right to our subjection, any farther than he is invested with that power. *Thirdly*, that as all government is only a means to an end, and that is the happiness of society; so no princes can have any power from God, but only to make their people happy.

Governors are the ministers of God for good, and as the good and happiness of every society, is provided for by laws to be executed according to their

their respective constitutions; so these laws are the rule of government and subjection, so long as they continue in force. To know therefore, how far subjection must be due in any society, we should first enquire into the nature of its constitution, and what laws they are governed by, and the method appointed for the execution of them. And as these laws are a rule both to governors and subjects, so from hence we may learn the duty of obedience; for the subjects duty can be carried no farther, than the right and power of the governor to command. So that law is the rule of subjection in every society. Therefore as the subject can be under no obligation to obey, where the governor has no power to command; so if the laws of the society are a rule to the governor, as he cannot justly command what the laws forbid, so neither can the subjects be under any duty to obey, any farther than the laws require. This is a certain maxim in all governments, and the argument is still clearer, in such governments as are under some stricter limitations, than others. For when a prince is invested in such a limited government, he accepts of it under such limitations; and as this supposes a tacit covenant, that he will govern the society according to them, so this is consequently a tacit condition of the people's duty, and subjection on their part. And therefore as all commands against law in such constitutions are in their own nature null; and all illegal commissions, both in the grant and execution of them are without authority; so no obedience can be justly required to them. This is so plain that it cannot bear a dispute. Wherefore, should a prince in such a legal and limited constitution, assume to himself a power to govern, either without, or contrary to law, and make his own will his own rule; he saps the foundation on which he stands, and dissolves all he does.

And

And if he is so inflexibly bent on this, that no *ad-
vices*, no entreaties, will prevail upon him, but on
the contrary, rather than be confined within his
own proper bounds, he will abdicate and desert his
people; as this is an apparent dissolution of the con-
stitution, by which he holds his government; so the
people are naturally discharged from their allegiance.
For as they have a right to their constitution and the
privileges of it, so they have a right to such means
as are necessary to their preservation, and may law-
fully put themselves under any other governor, that
the nature and necessity of their case requires.
These are certain principles founded in nature, and
as they give us a clear notion of subjection so far,
as it relates to limited constitutions, so if we apply
them to our own kingdom, they will shew us the
justice of that happy revolution, we have this day
celebrated our praises for*, and which leads me to
consider the case of that important event.

That we live under a mixt and limited monarchy,
where the prince's power is defined and directed by
law, is a truth not to be denied. And it is equally
as true, that at the time of the revolution, we had
then a prince upon the throne, whose laboured de-
signs were to overturn the fundamentals of our con-
stitution, and from a legal and limited, to subject
us to an absolute monarchy. We saw the govern-
ment executed in an arbitrary and illegal manner,
and that in the most important parts of it, by com-
missions granted to persons unqualified, and officers
put into places of the highest trust, directly contrary
to the express laws of the land. We saw our civil
and religious rights most daringly invaded; some of
our fellow subjects † punished for doing their duty,
and others deprived ‖ of their legal properties, for
not complying with illegal impositions, and which
could

* Nov. 5. † Dr. Sharp and the bishop of London
‡ Magdalen College.

could not be done without breach of oaths. And all this not only without or contrary to law, but with a design notoriously evident, to destroy and extirpate both our religion and liberties. We saw popery like a torrent coming in upon us. We saw it countenanced and supported by authority; popish schools and seminaries were erected, to sow the seeds of popery in our children, and popish priests imposed on our universities to cultivate and improve the same principles in those that were grown up; and others were sent over in vast numbers from beyond sea, to help forward, and reap the expected harvest. And to support all this, we saw a dispensing power established to set aside the force of all our laws, by which all our rights and properties were rendered precarious, and in effect given up into the hand and power of the king, that so the nation might depend upon his sole will and pleasure.

And as these proceedings were backed by a standing army, without the consent, and contrary to the judgment of parliament, great part of which was made up of *Irish* papists, commanded by popish officers, who were by interest and principle engaged to destroy our constitution; there was an absolute necessity in the nature of things, either tamely to give the constitution up, to part with every thing dear and valuable to a free people, and put ourselves and our posterity into a civil and religious bondage, or else to look out for our common safety. This was apparently our case, and which obliged the kingdom to seek out for aid. And when that deluded prince, forgetting all his natural and civil obligations to his people, chose rather to abdicate his government and desert his subjects, than be confined within the bounds of law and justice, the society had an undeniable right to provide for themselves. And since they who were intrusted with the rights of society, and appointed judges of its interests,

terests, did settle the crown in a protestant line, as being apparently the best and only way to secure the rights and religion of protestants, against the like future attempts and hazards; it is both the duty and interest of every member of the society, not only to submit to it, as *God's ordinance*, but embrace it and rejoice therein, as a *common blessing*.

This is the original foundation, upon which the revolution in 1688 stood, and our present happy government is built; which all may see was not founded in faction or restless discontent, avarice and ambition; but on the general right that all societies have from God, to provide for their own preservation; and from a real dissolution of the relation between the then ruling prince and his people, not only by his profest endeavours to subvert the constitution, upon the preservation of which his whole right depended; but also his voluntary abdication, and desertion of his government. And as there was then a new settlement made, which has long continued, and been often confirmed by the whole power of the society in parliament, what better foundation can any settlement have, or any people desire, than this? So that it is most apparently true, that the revolution was owing to the immediate hand of heaven.

For if the *Roman* usurpation was the *ordinance of God*, though forced upon the people by the sword, and was not only a subversion of the ancient commonwealth, but brought the whole empire into bondage; how much more was the revolution so, which drew its breath from the voice of the community, who fled to it as a common sanctuary, in defence of our ancient constitution, and the rights and liberties of our country? If the *Roman* government was the *ordinance of God*, which was founded in blood and cruelty, and seems to be set
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over the empire as a scourge; how much more was the revolution so, which appears to have been sent from heaven, as the immediate issue of the divine love and bounty? For it came to us, as a refuge in our distress, when we were upon the brink of ruin. And as it came like a small cloud from the east, which swelled till it overspread and refreshed our land in its calamity; so the end for which it came was in defence of God's cause, the cause of righteousness and truth, in opposition to tyranny and oppression, idolatry and superstition, not in our own kingdom alone, but also in foreign nations. For to this blessed revolution, we not only owe the enjoyment of our own liberties, but that all *Europe* are rescued from the chains of that mighty *Nimrod*, who was then setting up for universal monarch, and when nothing besides could in all appearance have put a stop to his ambition. To this we owe, not only our serving God, according to the primitive faith, "the faith that was once delivered to the saints;" but that the whole protestant interest was not entirely swallowed up, there being nothing that could in human reason have defeated the known designs of our enemies, but this great revolution, to whom under God it is, that we and all protestant countries still enjoy these blessings, and have any prospect of the continuance of them, to ourselves, and our posterity.

And if we also reflect on the means, by which this great work was effected; that contradictions conspired to accomplish it; popish bigots confederating in behalf of protestants, even the pope himself preserving us from popery; that he should lend his aid against his own authority, and endeavour to defeat, as he then did, a design that was declared to him, and confirmed by a splendid embassy from hence, of reconciling these kingdoms to the holy See: I say, when we reflect on all this, and consider,

sider, that so great and good an undertaking as this revolution was, should be blessed with so many, so important, and extensive mercies to this nation, and brought about by such strange and unlikely means, what can we in reason think, and will not every one who reflects, say, surely this *hath God done*; nor can there be any stronger evidence than this, that the revolution is the *power of God*, and the *ordinance of God*. And if so, what is the proper inference from hence, but that of the apostle, *wherefore ye must needs be subject*. For what an aggravated guilt would it be, to oppose a government, that has not only so many glaring characters of God's immediate appointment impressed on it; but also abounds with so many singular extraordinary blessings to ourselves and the world?

Duty, gratitude, and interest, the great *Diana*, that all *Asia* and the world worship, demand obedience to such a government; especially, when we see it in the hands of one*, who is truly the *minister of God to us for good*, and desires no power, but to make us happy. Were we groaning under the miseries of some of our neighbouring nations, human nature might be apt to murmur and repine; for oppression will make even a wise man mad. But blessed be God this is not our case; for we are the happiest people under heaven; we enjoy our liberties, and are maintained in our properties; our established church is flourishing, our commerce prosperous, our wealth and plenty flow in upon us. And as we abound in all the comforts of society at home, so are we advanced to the highest pitch of glory abroad, that ever this nation saw; and by the prudent conduct of a wise administration, are not only become the wonder and astonishment, but the envy and terror of the world; and can this tempt us to be ill subjects? It would favour of a diabolic

spirit

* Preached Nov. 5. 1726.

spirit not to be contented in such a state, in which we have not the least reason of complaint; unless we are surfeited with goodness, and overcharged with the burden of prosperity.

Methinks it should not be difficult to persuade any people, especially such as are advocates for passive obedience, to be patient and easy under such a government. To be content to be made happy, is no hard injunction; and yet there is little more than this required of us in order to our being so. If we will but patiently leave the public welfare to the counsels of those with whom it is entrusted, and who know the secret springs upon which it depends; If we will but discharge the duties of our stations, "studying to be quiet, and do our own business," humanly speaking, it is impossible, but we must be a great and happy people.

But if we will be censuring what we do not understand, and meddling with what we are not concerned in; if we will give way to every malicious insinuation, and aggravate every little disappointment; if we will not make allowances for such mistakes, as in all governments are unavoidable, and such accidents as cannot be foreseen or prevented; we shall never be free from faction and uneasiness: and what the natural consequence of this will be, every one is sufficiently informed. This only we need fear, because this only can undo us. And as we have been praising God for past deliverances, we have this mercy still to pray, that God would deliver us from ourselves.

DISCOURSE XXX. Abp. Tillotson.

Of stedfastness in religion.

*Josh. 24. 15.**But as for me, and my house, we will serve the Lord.*

AFTER *Joshua* had brought the people of *Israel* into the promised land, and settled them in the quiet possession of it, his great desire was to establish them in the true religion, namely, in the worship of the *one* true God, who had delivered them out of the land of *Egypt*, and brought them into the land of *Canaan*; and fearing lest after his death, the people should fall off from the true religion to the worship of idols, he like a wise and good governor, calls a general assembly of all *Israel*, and in a very eloquent speech, represents to them, in what a miraculous manner God had “ driven out the nations before them, much greater and stronger than they, and had given them their land to possess it, and punctually performed all that he had promised them. He therefore exhorted them to take great heed to themselves, to love God, and to serve him; lest it should come to pass, that as all good things are come upon you, which the Lord your God promised, so shall the Lord bring upon you all evil things, until he have destroyed you from off this good land, which the Lord your God hath given you *.”

After this he calls them together a second time, and enumerates the great mercies of God to them and their fathers, from the days of *Abraham*, whom

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* *Josh. 22. 1. 23. 15.*

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he had called out from among his idolatrous kindred and countrymen, unto that day; and then earnestly intreats them to renew their covenant with God, and solemnly to promise, that they would for ever serve God, and forsake the worship of idols: “now therefore fear the lord, and serve him in sincerity, and in truth; and put away the Gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in *Egypt*, and serve ye the lord.” And then in the text he leaves them to their free choice, as if they had not before engaged themselves to God by covenant, “and if it seem evil unto you to serve the lord, chuse you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods whom your fathers served on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the *Amorites*, in whose land ye dwell.” Not that they were at liberty, either to serve the true God, or not, but that religion ought to be their free choice; as if he had said, “if it seem evil unto you, after all the demonstrations which God hath given of his miraculous presence among you, and the mighty obligations you are under to him, for bringing you out of the land of *Egypt*, and the house of bondage, by so outstretched an arm, and giving you to possess the land of your enemies; if after all this you can quit the service of *this* God, and worship the *idols* of the nations whom you have subdued; if you can think it reasonable to do so, which surely you never can, then take your choice; if it seem evil unto you to serve the lord, chuse you this day whom you will serve.” And to encourage them to make a right choice, he declares to them his own resolution; “but as for *me* and my house, we will serve the lord.”

So that in effect he tells them; “I have proposed to your choice the best religion, and I both think and hope you will all steadfastly adhere to it.

It is so reasonable and wise, so much your interest and happiness to do it; but if you should be so weak as not to discern the truth, or so wilful and so wicked as not to embrace it; though you should all make another choice, and depart from the worship of the true God, to that of idols; yet for my own part, I am steadfastly resolved in a matter so reasonable, that no number, no example, shall prevail with me to the contrary; nay, I will, if need be, stand alone in what is so evidently and unquestionably right: and though this whole nation should all revolt from the worship of the true God, and join with the rest of the world in a false religion, and worship *idols*; and my family was the only *one* left in all the world, that continued to worship the God of *Israel*, I would still persist in my resolution, “that as for me and my house, we will serve the lord.” A resolution truly worthy of so great a prince, and so good a man, and is a noble example for us to imitate. In discoursing on these words, I will consider the matter, the bounds and limits of this resolution; and then endeavour to vindicate the reasonableness of this resolution, from the objections to which it may seem liable.

The matter of *Jeshua*’s resolution was, that if there should be a necessity for it, he would stand alone, or with only a few adhering to him, in the profession and practice of the true religion; and this was no impossible case, it having really and in fact happened in several ages and places of the world. Thus *Elijah*, when the people of *Israel* had “forsoaken the covenant of the lord, and broken down his altars, and slain his prophets,” and he only as he thought, was left to stand alone; even then he was very zealous for the Lord God of hosts, and with an undaunted courage stood up for the worship of the true God, and reproved

Ahab

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Ahab to his face, for his defection to the worship of idols *. And the three brave youths in *Daniel* † did with the like resolution, refuse to obey the command of king *Nebuchadnezzar*, “in worshipping the image which he had set up,” though all others submitted to pay honour to it. For they plainly told him, “if it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thy hand. If not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image, which thou hast set up.” And with the same spirit and courage did *Daniel* withstand the decree of *Darius*, which forbid men “to ask a petition of any God or man, for thirty days, save of the king only, under the pain of being cast into the den of lions; and when all others gave obedience to it, he set open the windows of his chamber towards *Jerusalem*, and knecled down upon his knees three times a day, and prayed and gave thanks, as he did aforetime ‡.” In the prevalency of the *Arian* heresy, *Athanasius* almost stood alone in the profession and maintenance of the truth. And thus in the height of popery, *Wickliff* appeared in *England*, *Jerom* of *Prague* and *John Huss* in *Germany* and *Bohemia*. And in the beginning of the reformation, when popery had quite over-run these western parts of the world, and subdued her enemies on every side, and antichrist sat securely possessed of his kingdom; then *Luther* arose, a bold and rough man, but a fit wedge to cleave in sunder so hard and knotty a block, who stoutly opposed the gross errors and corruptions of the church of *Rome*, and for a long time stood alone, and with a most invincible spirit and courage maintained his ground, and resisted the

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united

* 1 Kings 18. 18.

† Dan. 3. 17. 18.

‡ Dan. 6. 7.

united malice and force of antichrist and his adherents; and gave him so terrible a wound, that he is not yet recovered of it. So that for a man to stand alone, or only with a few adherents, is no imaginary supposition, but a case that hath really and in fact happened in several ages and places of the world. I now proceed to consider the due limits and bounds of this peremptory resolution.

In all matters of faith and practice, which are plain and evident, either from natural reason, or divine revelation, this resolution seems to be very reasonable; but in things doubtful, a modest man would be governed by the judgment of any wise man, more especially, by the unanimous judgment of the generality of men. For in matters of an indifferent nature, such as are many of the circumstances and ceremonies of God's worship, a man would not be stiff and immovable in any thing singular; but would be ready to submit himself to the general vote and opinion, and to comply with the common custom and practice, and much more with the rules and constitutions of authority, whether civil or ecclesiastical. Because in things lawful and indifferent, we are bound by the rules of decency and civility, not to oppose the general practice; and by the commands of God, we are certainly obliged to obey the lawful commands of lawful authority. But then in things plainly contrary to the evidence of sense or reason, or to the word of God, we ought not to compliment any number of men, nor to pin our faith upon any church in the world; no, not the pope, tho' never so many probable arguments were produced to prove his *infallibility*. In this case a man would be singular, and stand alone against the whole world; against the rage and wrath of a king, and all the terrors of his fiery furnace; even in other matters, he would not believe all the learned men upon

upon earth, against the clear evidence of sense and reason. If the greatest *mathematicians* of all ages, could be supposed to meet together in a general council, and should in the most solemn manner declare and give it under their hands and seals, that *twice two did not make four, but five*, this would never make me of their mind; nay, I who am no *mathematician* would maintain the contrary and persist in it, notwithstanding the positive opinion of the greatest and most learned men; because I should most certainly conclude, that they were either mad, or biassed by some interest, or swayed against the clear evidence of truth, and the full conviction of their own reason, to determine thus. Indeed, they might over-rule the point by their authority, but this could never influence my inward judgment.

And if any church, though with never so confident a pretence to *infallibility*, should declare that the bread and wine in the sacrament, by virtue of the consecration of the priest, are substantially changed into the natural body and blood of Christ; this is so notoriously contrary both to the sense and reason of mankind, that a person would chuse to stand single in opposing it, and laugh at, or rather pity those who can believe so monstrous an absurdity; or, if any church should declare, that *images* are to be worshipped, or that the service of public worship is to be performed in an unknown tongue; or, that the holy scriptures which contain the word and will of God, teaching men what they are to believe and do, in order to their eternal salvation, are to be locked up, and kept concealed from the people in a language which they do not understand, lest by the free use of them in their mother tongue, they should know more of the mind and will of God, than is proper for the common people to know, whose devotion and

obedience to the church chiefly depend upon their ignorance: Or should declare, that the sacrifice of Christ was not offered *once for all*, but ought to be repeated some millions of times every day; that the people ought to receive the communion in one kind only, and that the laity should on no account drink of the cup; and that the saving efficacy of the sacraments depends upon the intention of the priest, without which the receiver can have no benefit by them: all these are so plainly contrary to scripture, and most of them so unreasonable and absurd, that the authority of no church whatsoever can oblige a man to the belief of them; nay, as they are evidently contrary to the doctrine of the gospel, though an apostle, or an angel from heaven should declare them, we ought to reject them. For so *St. Paul* directs us; “though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed *.” And this he repeats over again, to express not only his own confident assurance, but the certainty of the thing. And here is an *anathema*, which we may with authority oppose to all the *anathema's* that the council of *Trent* hath so confidently denounced against all those, who shall deny these new doctrines of the church; which are in truth another gospel, than what our saviour and his apostles taught. And yet on their side, there is neither an apostle, nor an angel from heaven. I shall give but one instance more; if as *Bellarmino*, says, “that should the pope declare virtue to be vice, and vice to be virtue, I am bound to believe him, unless I would sin against my conscience,” yet, this would never oblige me; nay, should all the world say this, I could not possibly be of their mind, for this plain and undeniable reason, because if virtue

* Gal. i. 8. 9.

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and vice, be all one, then religion is nothing; since the main design of religion is to teach men the difference between virtue and vice, and to oblige them to practice the one, and refrain from the other. And if religion be nothing, then heaven and hell are nothing; and if heaven be nothing, then an infallible guide can be of no use to conduct us thither; because he is a guide to no place, and so his great office ceases and falls of itself.

But lest any should think me singular in this assertion, and that I allow too much to the single judgment of private persons, and too little to church authority, I will produce the deliberate judgment of a very learned man, and a great assertor of the church's authority, concerning what I am now speaking of, I mean Mr. *Hooker* in his book of *ecclesiastical polity*; his words are, "I grant, that proof derived from the authority of man's judgment, is not able to work that assurance, which doth grow by a stronger proof; and therefore although ten thousand councils should set down one and the same definitive sentence, concerning any point of religion whatsoever, yet one demonstrative reason alledged, or one testimony cited from the word of God himself to the contrary, could not chuse but over sway them all; in as much as for them to be deceived, it is not so impossible, as it is, that demonstrative reason, or divine testimony should deceive. — For men to be tied and led by authority, as it were with a kind of captivity of judgment, and though there be reason to the contrary, not to listen to it, but follow like beasts the first in the herd, this were brutish. — That the authority of men should prevail with men, either against or above reason, is no part of our belief.

Companies of learned men, though never so great and reverend, are to yield to reason, the weight whereof is no whit prejudiced by the sim-

plicity of the person which doth acknowledge it; but being found to be sound and good, the bare opinion of men to the contrary, must of necessity stoop and give place." This he delivers not only as his own sentiment, but what he apprehended to be the judgment of the *church of England*. — I shall now proceed to vindicate the reasonableness of this resolution, from the objections, to which the singularity of it may seem liable.

It is speciously urged by some, that it does not seem modest for a man to set up his own private judgment against the general suffrage and vote. I do admit, that in things indifferent, or doubtful and obscure, no one should be over confident of his own judgment, and peremptorily insist upon it, against the general opinion: but in things that are plain and evident, either from scripture or reason, it is neither immodestly, nor a culpable singularity, for a man to stand alone in the defence of truth. Because in such a case, a man does not oppose his own single and private judgment, to the judgment of many, but the common reason of mankind and the judgment of God, as plainly declared in his word. Should the generality of men turn atheists and infidels, and deny the being of God and his providence, the immortality of men's souls, and the rewards and punishments of another world; or should deny the truth of the christian religion, it would certainly be no breach of modesty for a man to appear single, if no body else would stand by him, in the resolute defence of these great truths. In like manner, when a whole church, though never so large and numerous, shall conspire to corrupt the christian religion, so far as to impose upon mankind, under the name of christian doctrines and articles of faith, things plainly contrary to the sense and reason of mankind, and to the clear express word of God; why must a man be thought immo-

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immodest, if he oppose such gross errors and corruptions of the christian doctrine? And what reason have the church of *Rome* to talk of modesty in this case, when they themselves have the face to impose upon mankind, the belief of things contrary to what they and every man else sees? As in their doctrine of transubstantiation, in the worship of images, denying the people the free use of the holy scriptures, and the public service of God in an unknown tongue; besides a great many other idolatrous practices of that church, contrary to the very end and design of all religion, and to the common reason and liberty of mankind. Again,

It is pretended, that it is more prudent for private persons to err with the church, than to be pertinacious in their own opinions. To this I answer, that it can never be prudent to err with any member in religious matters of real moment, merely for numbers sake; because wilfully to comply with the known errors and corruptions of any church whatsoever, must in its nature be certainly damnable. As to what is urged, that men ought sooner to be excused in following the church, than any particular man or sect. To this I answer, that this is true, if the matter be doubtful, and especially, if the probability be equal on both sides; but if the error be gross and palpable, it will be no excuse, that we follow any church or number of men whatsoever. For the competition here, is not between men and men, but between God and men; and in this case, we must forsake all men to follow God and his truth. "Thou shalt in no wise follow a multitude in a known error," is in reason a rule of equal obligation with that divine law, "Thou shalt in no wise follow a multitude to do evil;" or rather is comprehended in it, because to comply with a *known error*, is certainly to do evil. And this very objection the *Jews* made against our saviour and the doctrine which he taught, that the guides and

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governors of the *Jewish* church did entirely differ from him, and were of a contrary mind; "have any of the rulers, say they, believed on him?" What? Will you be wiser than they; and follow the doctrine of one single man, against the unanimous judgment and sentence of the great *Sanhedrim*, to whom the trial of doctrines doth of right belong?

But as plausible as this objection may seem, we are to consider that in a corrupt and degenerate church, the guides and rulers of it are generally the worst, and the most deeply engaged in its errors and corruptions. As they brought them in at first, so their successors, being bred up in the belief and practice of them, they think themselves obliged to support and maintain them; and thus a long prescription seems to give a sort of sacred stamp, even to error. So it was in the *Jewish* church in our saviour's time, and the same in the times of popery, when their rulers made them to err: insomuch, that when *Martin Luther* appeared in opposition to the errors and superstitions of that church, and was prest with this very objection which the pharisees urged against our saviour, he was forced to say a kind of unmannerly truth, "that religion is never in greater hazard, and worse treated, than amongst the most reverend," meaning the *pope* and his *cardinals*, and all the *Romish* hierarchy, who depended on them.

Another objection is, that as there may be danger of error in following blindly the belief of the church, so there may be as great danger of *schism* in forsaking the communion of the church, upon pretence of errors and corruptions; allowing this to be true, yet where great errors and corruptions are real and evident, and our compliance with them is made a necessary condition of our communion with that church; in such case the guilt of *schism*, how great a crime soever it be,

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doth not fall upon those who forsake the communion of that church, but upon those who drive them out of it, by the sinful conditions which they impose upon them. And this is the real case between us and the church of *Rome*, as we have fully proved upon several occasions; nor have they been able to vindicate and clear themselves, of those gross errors and corruptions, which they require of all their members, as necessary conditions of communion with them here, and of eternal salvation hereafter. What we object to them, are things as plain as any contained in the bible, and which every one would see, were they suffered to read it. The worship of images is there as plainly forbidden, as are murder and adultery. The communion in both kinds, is as expressly instituted by our saviour, as the sacrament of the lord's supper itself; only that church pretends to a dispensing power, as a privilege inherent to and inseparable from it. Again, public prayers and the service of God in an unknown tongue, are also as plainly and fully condemned by *St. Paul*, as any one thing in all his epistles.

These things being so evident and undeniable, are a sufficient justification, not only of the church of *England* in reforming from the gross errors and corruptions of the church of *Rome*; but also of all other persons, who have for the same reasons withdrawn themselves from her communion, in any of the popish countries. For if any church fall off to idolatry, every good christian ought to forsake her communion, and to stand single and alone, in the profession of the pure and true religion, and not to communicate with a corrupt and idolatrous church. But there are some, who think it the greatest absurdity, to say the church can err. To this I answer; that the whole church, I mean, that all the christians in the world should
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fall into idolatry, and into errors and practices directly contrary to the christian doctrine revealed in scripture, is what I think all deny; but that any particular church may fall into such errors and practices, is, I apprehend as universally granted; only, that they would have the *Roman* church excepted. And why? Because, say they, tho' *ours* be a *particular* church, yet it is also the *universal* church. If there can be any good sense, in a *particular universal church*, then the *Roman* church may be exempted from the fate of all other churches; but if the *Roman* catholic, that is, a *particular universal church* be a gross and palpable contradiction, then the church of *Rome*, can have no more pretence to this privilege, than any other particular church whatsoever.

And yet some say, that if a man thinks himself obliged to quit the *Roman* communion, and should not have an opportunity of joining himself to any other church, that in such case, he ought to give over all thoughts of religion, and not be so vain and weak, as to think of going to heaven alone by himself. It is without doubt a very great sin to despise the communion of the church, or separate from it, so long as we can continue in it without sin; but if it should happen, that we must either disobey God for company, or stand alone in our obedience to him, we ought most certainly to obey God, and profess his truth, whether any one else will join with us in that profession or not; and they who say otherwise condemn the whole reformation, in particular *Luther*, for breaking with the church of *Rome*, if nobody else would have joined with him in that honest design; and had it been so, I hope he would have had the grace and courage to have stood alone, in so good and glorious a *cause*, and to have laid down his life for it. And for any one to be of

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a different opinion, is just as if a man would deliberately chuse rather to be drowned in company, than to be saved by a plank or small boat; or to be carried into harbour any other way, than in a great ship with many hands.

In short, a good man must resolve to obey God, and profess his truth, though all the world should do otherwise. Christ hath promised to preserve his church to the *end of the world*; I mean, he will take care that there shall always be in some part of the world, some persons that shall make a sincere profession of his true religion. But he hath no where promised to preserve any *one part* of his church from such errors and corruptions, as may oblige all good men to quit the communion of that *part*, even when they may not know where to resort for actual communion, with any other sound part of the christian church; as it happened to some during the reign and rage of popery, in these western parts of the christian church. The result from all this discourse is, to confirm and establish us all in the hour of temptation, and of the powers of darkness, in the well grounded belief of the necessity and justice of our reformation, from the errors and corruptions of the *Roman* church; and to engage us to hold fast “the profession of our faith without wavering;” and not only to profess and promise, as *Peter* did to our Lord, “though all men forsake thee, yet will not I;” but should there be occasion, to perform and make good this promise, with the hazard of all that is dear to us, even of life itself. And whatever trials God may permit us to fall into, let us take up the pious resolution of *Joshua*, that whatever others do, *we will serve the Lord.*

DISCOURSE XXXI. *Balguy.*

Of reason and revelation ; shewing that diversity of opinion is no just cause of discord among christians.

I Cor. 14. 20.

But in understanding be men.

ABSTRACTING from the particular occasion of these words, they set before us a general precept of great use and importance for the conduct and regulation of our religious concerns. Though our saviour always enjoined modesty, probity and candour ; yet *rational* disciples never were, nor could be unacceptable to him ; because he required them to judge for themselves, and encouraged the use of all proper means of satisfaction and conviction. For as God made mankind intelligent creatures, and blessed them with reason and understanding, he undoubtedly expects and requires, that they make a suitable use of so divine a gift. But when sin entered into the world, ignorance and darkness soon followed ; and the depravity of mens wills produced a corruption of their understandings. Hence it was that our gracious and merciful creator saw fit, in the fulness of time, to indulge the world sitting in darkness, to dispel its thick mists, and re-enlighten it with the beams of revelation : by which the important truths of religion, before dimly perceived, were fully brought to light, and mens natural powers recruited and reinforced. But surely this new light no way
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interfered with the old; that is, revelation could not be repugnant to reason, however it might improve or excel it. Divine communications may differ in kind or degree; but they can never contradict each other. For truth and right however discovered or dispensed, are of no variable nature, but eternally the same.

And as the use of reason and understanding was never superseded by revelation; so the latter always supposed and required the former, and would indeed have been useless without it. Even the christian revelation could otherwise have had no influence, no effect; because the proofs of it must be examined and judged by reason, or not at all. Its prophecies, miracles, doctrines, precepts, could no ways be tried without a rational discussion; and the more rationally this is done, the sooner will christianity prevail. Well therefore might the apostle exhort men to cultivate their reason, and exert their understanding; especially if it be further considered, that this revelation was granted at a time, when learning and knowledge flourished most; when arts and sciences were at their highest pitch. At such a period, and in such a state, the neglect of reason must have been very unseasonable, and attended with ill consequences. Even miracles and inspiration, however they might astonish men, would have lost great part of their effect, if accompanied with defects of mens understanding and natural powers. I am sensible the gospel was delivered with great simplicity, and intended to be so; but still it was never at variance with truth and reason, nor any way injurious to mens natural faculties. Though our saviour made choice of illiterate apostles, and supported them in the propagation of his gospel, with *signs and wonders, and demonstrations of the spirit*, yet he never discountenanced the exercise of their understandings;

ings, but encouraged it upon all occasions. For he bids them to be "as wise as serpents, and as harmless as doves." The use of men's natural powers he never condemned, however he might the abuse of them. Though he was pleased to propagate his religion at first by *divine* means and methods, yet he was no enemy to *human ones*; well knowing that both originally sprung from the same fountain, and that the former would in a great measure be soon withdrawn.

Indeed, the above caution was very necessary on account of those strong prejudices which the gospel had to encounter. The doctrine of Christ crucified was a stumbling-block to the *Jews*, and mere foolishness to the *Greeks* and *Gentiles*. Who being puffed up with unsound, *vain philosophy*, they disdainfully rejected what they could not immediately comprehend. And had not the first preachers of it defended and supported it by rational means, as well as supernatural signs; this prejudice would probably have taken such deep root as never to be overcome. Even our modern *Gentiles* seem yet entangled in these briars; and call out for more reason and argument, amidst the strongest evidence of all kinds; complaining of neglected reason in opposition to the text, and the whole tenor of the new testament. Had the sages and sophists of antiquity found any thing plainly absurd in the doctrines of christianity, or manifestly repugnant to the light of nature, they would soon have shut the door of their minds against conviction, and have eluded the force of their strongest miracles. This would have been an invincible obstacle to the success of the gospel; for no philosophers, or men of learning, would then have become converts. In truth, no new religion, no set of doctrines could prevail in any age among wise men, which profess an enmity to reason, or meant the subversion of human understanding.

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Whenever reason and revelation interfere and disagree, they cannot both be real; one must certainly be false. So that the caution in the text, and others of the like import, directly conduce to the credit and success of the christian religion, and did greatly tend to promote and facilitate its first propagation. For as nothing more discredits and disappoints pretended revelations, than enthusiastic absurdity, and opposition to good sense; so nothing does more honour to that of the gospel, than its constant appeal to plain evidence, and the sober decisions of right reason. And had it not been a reasonable service, it must have been soon blasted by the storms of persecution. So that the satisfaction and edification of private christians are very much promoted by that proper use of their rational powers, which the apostle prescribes. For,

As reason is our first and immediate guide, and religion our highest concern, a due harmony between them must be not only very desirable, but necessary to every considerate christian. I speak of *revealed* religion, which we are bound to receive with reverence as soon as we are convinced of its truth. But this conviction would be much weakened, if not destroyed, supposing such revelation at variance with our reason. Let a private christian judge and act with the greatest probity and sincerity; yet if the scripture directed one way, and his conscience another; if he found a law in the gospel warring against the law of his understanding; what perplexity, what uneasiness, what disorder would attend such a situation? But when he finds that revelation hath only restored and resumed old truths, and introduced such new ones, as reason cannot object to, but entirely approves; then he examines it with pleasure, and submits to it with comfort and satisfaction. Had christianity been a fiction, or the gospel resembled the alcoran, then indeed the precept

precept in the text would have been very improper. Instead of being required to cultivate our understandings, we should rather have been exhorted to neglect them. For *what communion has light with darkness*, truth with falsehood, or argument with absurdity? But as the above precept infers the truth and excellence of the christian religion; so this truth and excellence justifies that precept, and makes the observance of it very desirable and satisfactory. Nay, the more any man has improved his natural faculties, the more comfort and complacency he will find in the gospel revelation.

This precept also conduces very much to the improvement and edification of men's minds, both with respect to faith and practice. As to faith, men act unreasonably when they either assent without evidence, or demand immoderate degrees of it. To submit implicitly to the dictates of authority, is to resign our reason and understanding blindfold to the determination of others. But such a prostitution of our faculties can neither be acceptable to God, nor beneficial to ourselves. Because God requires that our talents should be used and improved, and man's perfection and happiness depend on the exercise of his powers, and not on the disuse and resignation of them. A rational conduct in the settlement of our principles and persuasions, peculiarly tends to improve the mind; but a blind faith naturally ends in the rust of the mind, and the corruption of its faculties.

On the other hand, to demand immoderate degrees of evidence for points offered to our inquiry, is counter-acting reason, and perverting judgment. It argues an unbecoming opposition to the nature of things, an impatience under the lot and condition of humanity. It leads to arrogance and self-will, and tends to produce habits of obstinacy and contention. It keeps out of the mind many valuable

luable truths, which would both contribute to its ornament and advantage. So that to judge rather by fancy and humour, than reason and understanding, especially in matters of religion, is both a disgrace to, and a dangerous deprivation from our nature. If we would then consult our own credit, or the honour of our religion; if we would aim at the improvement of our minds, and the advancement of our natural powers; we must equally avoid the servility of a blind faith, and the perverseness of a capricious dissent.

And as in faith, so in respect of practice, the advantage of *rational* measures is very manifest, even through all the branches of our duty. In the service and worship of God, as nothing can be more unworthy, so nothing can be more unedifying, than a blind ignorant devotion. Without just conceptions of the deity, the great ends of worship can never be answered. False notions of God defeat the ends of contemplation, and render that imitation dangerous, which otherwise leads directly to the perfection of human nature. Thence proceed the various flights of enthusiasm, and the follies and absurdities of superstition. Some fancy themselves to be, they know not how, the peculiar friends and favourites of heaven; others imagine, though they know not why, that they are singled out for objects of wrath, and monuments of vengeance. What barbarities of worship do we read of in the *Gentile* world! What miserable methods of expiation! What horrid victims and profusions of blood! And to the eternal infamy of human nature, even that of our own species! Such were the fruits of ignorance and darkness, of neglected reason and uncultivated understanding! when nothing was to be seen or heard of but rudeness and barbarity, a tedious round of ridiculous rites and stupid ceremonies. If any christians have relapsed into these gross absurdities,

absurdities, it is much to be lamented ; but it fully proves the great use and necessity of the apostles precept, *in understanding be men*. From hence it appears, that by serving and worshipping God in a rational way, we consult most effectually the improvement of our minds and morals. By ascribing to the great governor of the world perfect wisdom, equity and goodness ; and constantly representing him to us in this amiable light, we both honour him and edify ourselves. Whether we pray to, or praise him ; this glorious idea in view exalts the mind, engages our affection, and inclines us to imitate that excellence which we can never enough admire ; such a service not only becomes intelligent creatures, but is their highest honour and happiness, and will be for ever. Again,

The light of reason and right direction of our understanding is also very useful in respect of social duties. The love of our neighbour is enjoined both by natural and revealed religion. But the question is, how and in what manner it is to be expressed. Benevolence must constantly work in our hearts, and prompt us to action ; but to point out the rules and measures of performing this, is the province of our understandings. To wish well to, and promote the spiritual and temporal welfare of mankind, as power permits, and opportunities offer, is most certainly our duty ; but to gratify all inclinations, and comply with all humours, is neither *our* duty nor *their* interest. We are bound to support the authority of reason, as far as our power or influence extends. Hereby benevolence is limited, and charity restrained. As a rational conduct must ever be expected from rational creatures, because the dignity of our nature requires it ; so nothing is more advantageous to the public, nor more improving and beneficial to ourselves.

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And here I cannot but observe that general propensity which is in mankind, of breaking loose from the bonds of humanity, and cherishing discord and disaffection merely on account of differences of opinions, especially in matters of religion, though it be a practice discountenanced and condemned by the first principles and clearest precepts, both of reason and religion. Whatever be the meaning of it, we seem all to expect, that others should think as we do, and subscribe to our principles and persuasions. And whenever this expectation fails, as it perpetually must, our affection is apt to cool, and our good-will to abate, in proportion to the difference. Whoever judges in his own way, and rejects ours, at least forfeits some share of our esteem, and often becomes an object of our high displeasure, if not deemed our enemy. Such an inhuman procedure being too general and common, it deserves to be a little considered. Let us then briefly enquire into the true cause of this proceeding; for unless that be discovered, it will be in vain to think of a cure.

To what principle then can we ascribe this? Is it owing to our love of truth, and our zeal and concern for the support of it? No; for such a principle, if sincere, would make us behave quite the reverse. But admitting our opinions to be just and true, how are they to be maintained, promoted and propagated? By ill-will, or good-will; by hatred or love; by injuries and reproaches, or kind usage and gentle treatment? Surely, if we would recommend our opinions effectually, we must procure them a fair hearing, and appear well affected to those whom we would convince. • But if we discover any signs of enmity and disaffection, men will be naturally prejudiced against all the arguments we can urge; because they may justly suspect, that we are influenced by motives very different from what we pretend. Who-
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ever then has a real regard for truth, and is desirous to promote its interest, will doubtless follow other methods than those we are speaking of. He will find it necessary to correspond with men of different persuasions fairly and friendly; and in all his dealings, to proceed with humanity, equity and candor. He will be so far from exasperating their minds by malevolence, or contempt; that he will strive to conciliate their good will, and cultivate their esteem, by a willing discharge of all such good offices, as may reasonably be expected from him. So that a pretence of our love and zeal for truth, cannot justify the practice we have been condemning.

But then, may not a pious concern for the glory of God, make men impatient of opposition, and zealous for their opinions, in order to preserve the doctrines of religion, in their original purity? However plausibly this may be alledged, it cannot be easily proved true. Let the pure doctrines of religion by all means be guarded and maintained as carefully as may be; but how is this to be done? Will animosity or reproaches have a better effect, than argument and fair reasoning? If we think our neighbour has erred and strayed from the paths of truth; must we fall out with and abuse him, in order to bring him back in the right way? Will our treating him angrily or scornfully, make him more attentive to instruction, or more open to conviction? Will he not rather be apt to conclude, that our passions and dispositions are more faulty than his faith, and more irregular than his judgment? As, "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God," so it is the most improper instrument to maintain truth; or rather it is much more likely to subvert it. For can we suppose that God can ever be glorified by such measures as are repugnant to charity and humanity, and contrary to the principles

ciples both of nature and religion? Such a conduct is no less injurious to truth than to the public peace and tranquillity of mankind. To promote and propagate what we believe to be the truth, by amicable methods, is undoubtedly a real service to the public; but strife and variance, and uncharitable proceedings, are the very bane of human society.

Since then the behaviour we are speaking of, is not to be justified from the before mentioned suppositions; where shall we search for the true source, or to what cause or principle may it justly be ascribed? To none, I fear, that is praise worthy or even innocent, but to what is exceedingly blameable, and of which we ought to be ashamed. For in truth it springs from *pride, vanity*, and immoderate *self-love*. Being swelled with a high conceit of our own opinions, because they are ours; we become so strongly attached to them, that every opposition gives us pain, and raises our displeasure. Hence chiefly proceed those severe judgments and rigorous dealings, which so often appear among christians, to the dishonour of our holy religion, and the reproach of human nature. An intemperate fondness for our own notions, sanctified by specious names, has laid waste our charity, and often made us to violate the first principles of humanity and common justice.

But the unreasonableness and iniquity of such a proceeding will evidently appear, if we will but consider, that by the law of nature, by all the rules of reason and religion, every man has a right, and is entitled to our good will and esteem, whatever his character or conduct may be; unless he forfeits it by his misbehaviour and demerit. If we entertain a hard thought, an unfavourable opinion of any man without grounds, we are very unjust and injurious to him. And therefore no disagreements or differences of opinion, can be a just ground for us

to dislike or forfeit our esteem ; the reason is, because no man's opinions or persuasions are in his own power. He is under a necessity of believing and judging according as the evidence of things appears to him. He may indeed misapply and pervert his faculties ; so may we ; but none can know this but God and a man's own conscience. But supposing that other men use their faculties and exercise their judgments as fairly and uprightly as we do, and yet perhaps widely differ from us. Let me ask what is the offence, or where shall we fix the blame ? Shall we accuse men of involuntary faults ; or lay to their charge things unavoidable ? Are men to answer for those operations of the mind wherein they are quite passive, and which they can no more alter, than they can the very frame of their nature ? If they have carefully sought for the truth, and sincerely followed the best light they could get, they are innocent before God, and secure of his acceptance, whatever errors they may have fallen into. But it seems, men are not so easily satisfied. So hard and unreasonable are we, that we take offence where none is either given or meant. If our neighbour's thoughts and principles are not conformable to ours ; he presently incurs our ill opinion, our indignation and our censures ; We condemn him without reason, and would oftentimes punish him without mercy if we could. Has he done us any wrong or injury ? Not any ; and we may with as good reason, quarrel with him for the difference of his look and features, as for the difference of his opinions. Both are alike involuntary and out of his power and choice. But suppose he could think as we do, why should not he use his own liberty as well as we ? He differs no more from us, than we do from him ; and consequently if there be any fault or offence committed, it equally concerns both. He has as good right to direct and dictate to us, as we to him ; unless we pretend to set up our
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sentiments as a common standard. If we think ourselves in the right and others in the wrong, may not they suppose the same in favour of themselves? But whether it be made by one or the other, assurance and confidence are no certain marks of truth. Nay, suppose that truth is actually on our side; yet even then we cannot expect the concurrence of other men, till they are convinced of it. And in order to convince them, let any one judge whether cool arguments and candid instructions, be not much more likely means, than either bitter reproaches, or contemptuous neglect?

We cannot find that our saviour or his apostles, did either treat persons of a moral good character, or ordered such to be treated by others, with rigour and severity merely on account of their errors, whether small or great. Such a proceeding being directly contrary to the true spirit and design of the gospel, as well as to the tenor of its precepts. However, the maintainers of immoral doctrines and wicked principles may be there branded; yet great lenity and indulgence are ever shewn to mere errors of judgment, and the mistakes of well meaning men. In short, the disposition we have been considering is inhuman and unjust, and equally to be condemned by reason and revelation. Indeed, nothing is more opposite to the true genius of christianity, or the example and practice of its great author; whose gentleness and meekness were never exhausted by the most injurious actions, much less by involuntary failings, and invincible mistakes. Whenever we find his zeal exerted in sharp admonitions and warm reproofs; we are sure there is real guilt of the worst sort. But opinions and judgments simply erroneous never offended him, and we may safely say never will.

This leads me briefly to take notice of the pernicious consequences of the practice here complained of, as producing both *public* and *private*

evils of the highest malignity. To this has been owing most of the calamities and miseries, which has often so cruelly infected the christian world. From this fountain have flowed not only bitter waters, but streams of blood in every age: Inquisitions, persecutions, martyrdoms, murders, massacres, are in a great measure to be placed to the account of this intolerating, unchristian spirit. A considerable part of the best and worthiest of mankind have fallen victims to this barbarous principle. The chief blessings of society it has corrupted and poisoned; it has robbed men of their mutual affection, benevolence and esteem, infused jealousies, kindled contentions, and spread variance far and wide: it has divided friends, families, kindred, crumbled communities into parties and factions; burst asunder the strongest obligations both natural, civil and religious.

And if we consider its *private* effects, and how it operates on the minds of those who harbour it; we shall find it as mischievous and fatal within, as without. It perverts men's understanding, corrupts their judgments and alienates their affections; it confounds their ideas of merit and demerit, and makes them estimate characters by false rules and fallacious measures; it creates uneasy sentiments productive of ill will; it nourishes presumption, confidence and self-conceit; and destroys the kind instincts of humanity and compassion. And what enjoyment, peace and tranquility of mind are to be expected, where so malignant a principle has taken hold, and fixed itself to any depth? A principle so unnatural and perverse, so injurious to virtue, and destructive of happiness; that it is as great a curse to its possessors, as to the public. Lastly, it is a discredit and dishonour to religion, for christianity ever suffers by this very great misconduct. Candour and charity are the chief characteristics of christians; their peculiar ornament and noblest distinction. And whenever it is sacrificed to mere opinions

nions and points of speculation; the profession itself is charged with the faults and follies of its professors. The gospel grants all due freedom and every innocent liberty, and requires men to stand fast therein. On the contrary, many christians provide chains and fetters, and oblige men to put them on. Private judgment is not only our privilege but our duty; not only permitted, but enjoined by Christ and his apostles. What dishonour then, what indignity do christians offer to their sacred institution; when, instead of encouraging private judgment, they will impose an implicit faith upon others? When, instead of leaving them at liberty to interpret scripture and judge for themselves, they tie them down to the doctrines and explications of frail and fallible guides?

Thus we find that the exhortation in my text is of great importance in the government of ourselves. To be *men in understanding*, is to think, judge and act like men. That is, to take counsel of our reason, and follow its dictates with steadiness and resolution. To govern our passions, and regulate our appetites by the rules which it gives; and at all times to guard and maintain its laws inviolate. Nothing is more unmanly, dishonorable and shameful, than to subject reason to lust, and suffer that divine principle to come under the yoke, which was ordained, and ought by the supremacy of nature, to rule the whole universe. But though reason ought ever to sit at the helm, and govern our passions; yet it should not, nor cannot absolutely destroy them. Since they are natural to the human frame, reason will never propose their extirpation, nor torment and vex them in vain. It will keep them in order, and govern them as subjects, but not as slaves. A rational conduct does not consist therefore of those ill judged rigors, and fruitless austerities, which some christians have practised.

So that to cultivate our natural powers, and exercise our understandings in religious matters, so far from being injurious to religion, or detrimental to ourselves; that it supports and strengthens the one, and peculiarly befriends the other. It not only improves our noblest faculty, but qualifies us for more sublime enjoyments both here and hereafter. It tends to reconcile men to their whole duty, by enabling them to see its fitness and excellence in the clearest light. In short, to reverence reason and conscience, and act in conformity to its dictates, is the highest honour and truest interest of the whole intelligent creation. Herein consists that glorious resemblance to the supreme being, which dignifies men and angels; and if duly improved, will hereafter distinguish and make them shine, *like stars for ever more.*

If then, we have any regard to plain reason and natural equity; if we wish peace and prosperity, either to our fellow creatures or ourselves; if we have any concern for the glory of God, and the honour of his dispensations; let us not presume either to exercise *dominion* over other men's *faith*, or to oppress their understandings, or impair their liberties. Let us grudge no man the possession of those rights which nature has given him, and the gospel has confirmed to him; ever resembling that divine rule "of dealing with others, as we would be dealt with ourselves." In order to this, let us carefully guard against all excesses of self-love; resist the impulses of vanity; and check betimes the desires of dominion. Let the love of equity and probity prevail in our minds, let us maintain and cherish sobriety of thought, and humility of spirit. Above all, let us put on *charity, which is the bond of perfectness, the end of the commandment, and the very essence of the gospel.*

DISCOURSE XXXII. *Wake.*

An exhortation to mutual charity among protestants.

Rom. 15. 5, 6, 7.

Now the God of patience and consolation, grant you to be like minded one towards another, according to Christ Jesus; that ye may with one mind, and one mouth, glorify God, even the father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.

THERE were many among the *Jews*, who tho' converted to the christian faith, did yet continue zealous for the law, not only carefully observing themselves its rites and ceremonies, but they would also impose upon others the observance of them. The *Jewish* converts were the first beginners of this dispute, and pursued it with too much zeal; nor were the *Gentile* christians without blame; for they not only stood fast in that liberty wherewith Christ had made them free; but also despised their weak brethren, and were almost ready to cut them off from their communion.

The apostle therefore in this epistle, chiefly addresses himself to the *Gentile* christians, whom he calls the *strong in faith*; and in this chapter, exhorts them in a most excellent discourse, to bear the *infirmities of the weak*; not to grieve nor despise the *Jewish* converts for their mistaken zeal, but by complying a little, and condescending to their

their infirmities, to endeavour to convince them of their error. "Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification, *ver. 2.*" and then concludes in the words of the text; wherein is contained a hearty prayer to God, that he would inspire both *Jews* and *Gentiles*, with such a spirit of unity and charity, that they might, notwithstanding all their differences, unanimously join in the same common worship of God, and also with the same hearty affection to one another; and as the result of his whole discourse, he exhorts them to be charitable and kind, to receive, love, and assist one another; and not to despise, censure, or deprive each other of their charity or communion.

These words contain an exhortation to the dissenting christians then, and also to us now, not to lose our charity, or break communion with one another, on account of such things wherein we may safely differ; but mutually to bear with each other in our differences; and this the apostle most powerfully enforces, by the example of Christ towards us; and because the greater glory will hereby redound to God. "Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us, to the glory of God." This exhortation and enforcement I shall endeavour to explain and inculcate in the following manner.

First, I will prove, that there may be differences in matters of lesser moment, between very good and zealous christians, without any just reflection upon their persons or their religion. *Secondly*, that these differences ought not to hinder such from agreeing, not only in a common charity, but if possible, in a common worship of God too. *Thirdly*, that it is therefore the duty of all christians, especially of those who are *strong in faith*, not only

to pray for such an union, but heartily endeavour themselves, and earnestly to stir up others, to procure it.

As to the first, the very history of my text sufficiently proves it; for there was then a great division between the *Jewish* and *Gentile* converts, about the ritual observances of the law of *Moses*; and the dissenting parties managed the dispute with so much zeal, that they had almost lost their charity, and a deplorable schism was made in the church of Christ. But will any say that this derogated, either from the truth of their common christianity, or that infallible authority, with which the apostles delivered it to them? Nay, the parties themselves had both of them a true zeal for the glory of God; the one to observe these ceremonial institutions, as being still required by God; the other to refuse them, not only as a needless burden, but even contrary to the grace of Christ, declared in his gospel. This is very clearly expressed by St. Paul. "He that regardeth the day, regardeth it to the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day to the Lord, he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not to the Lord, he eateth not, and giveth God thanks*." Indeed, we must say, either that all, even the least points, relating to our religion, are so clearly and plainly revealed, that no honest man can be mistaken, if he impartially enquires into them; which from the great differences among men, it is plain they are not: or else, that mens different capacities, opportunities, tempers and education are such, as not to expect, that all good men should agree, in all their notions of religion, any more than they do in other concerns; and dare any one to pronounce sentence of damnation against another, in

* Rom. 14. 6.

whom there appear all the characters of an humble, upright, sincere christian, only perhaps because he has not the same instruction, or has read the same books, or thinks the same way with his accuser? Since then mens understandings are different, and they will differ in their reasoning and opinion from one another, about the same things, and yet may deserve to be esteemed very good and wise men; how vain then must that argument be which is urged by papists against us, from our differences in a few lesser points of our religion, as to conclude us to be erroneous in the greater; as if because we are not exactly of the same opinion in every thing, that therefore we ought to be credited in nothing; or, because protestants when they differ are mistaken on one side, therefore when they agree, they are mistaken on both?

But among our other divisions, we are still all agreed in whatever is fundamental in the faith, or necessary to be believed and professed by us, in order to our salvation. There is no good protestant, but does firmly believe the apostle's creed; and embraces the holy scriptures, as the word of God and rule of his faith, and readily acknowledges, whatever is plainly revealed therein, or can by necessary consequence be proved thereby; so that our differences do not so much concern the foundations of christianity, as did those of the judaizing christians; and if their differing from one another was no prejudice to the truth of their christianity then; why should our lesser differences become so much a greater argument against our common christianity now.

But if our differing from one another in some points, be an argument that we are not certain in any, then the church of *Rome* are in as bad a case as we; because they differ amongst themselves in points much more considerable than we do.

do. To give one instance in the pope's supremacy, in which, according to *Bellarmino*, the sum of popery consists. Some hold the pope to be head of the church by divine right; others the contrary. Some believe he is infallible; which others deny. Some that the pope alone without a council, may determine all controversies; others that he cannot. If then, they disagree in points of such importance, may not we return their own inference upon them, "that since they differ in such things as these, they are so far from having that *absolute infallibility* claimed by them, that in truth they have not so much as any certainty among them, even in those points wherein they do agree." Indeed, they have no means of ending their differences, more than we; each of us acknowledge, that the holy scriptures are the word of God, and an *infallible rule of faith*; and surely that can be no very good means of ending all their other differences; which is itself one of their greatest controversies, where to find their infallible judge.

As to our differences, we agree in all those things, that are necessary to a true and saving faith; and if we differ in lesser concerns, this is no more than what all other christians have ever done, even the church of *Rome* herself. So that, either those differences which were among the christians of old, and are now among us, are no prejudice to the common truth, which we profess; or, if they be, then the consequence will fall as heavily on the church of *Rome*, as upon us, and be of the same force against their religion, as ours. Besides, if this principle be allowed, that because men differ in some things, they ought not to be credited in any, what will then become, not only of the protestant religion as opposed to popery, but even of christianity itself? For might not a *Turk* or *Jew*, draw out a large history of the variations

riations of christians among themselves, from the controversy of the text, unto this day. And then by the very same principle conclude against us all, that we have none of us any certain grounds for our religion, because where there are so many differences, some of us must be in the wrong. And might not a *sceptic* by the same rule, argue against all reason and religion too; that the disagreement of mankind in many points of the greatest importance, clearly proves that there is no certainty in any thing; and that therefore we ought not to rely upon the one, or the other. So that unless we will reject all the measures of christian charity towards our neighbour, and the common truth, nay, even of christianity itself, and of our reason, and all religion in general; we must conclude, that good christians may differ from one another, in matters of lesser moment, without any just reflection upon themselves, or their religion.

But I must desire not to be misunderstood; I only mean the differing in such things, as do not concern the fundamentals of faith, nor destroy the true worship of God; nor are otherwise so clearly revealed, but that wise and good men, after all their enquiries, may still continue to differ in their opinions concerning such particulars. For otherwise, if interest and prejudice blind mens eyes, and they *err* because they resolve not to be convinced; and so by their own fault continue in mistakes, that are contrary to the foundation of faith, and destructive of piety: for instance, if men will profess to believe but in one God, and yet worship thousands; if they will believe the second commandment, and yet contrary to it, make and bow down before graven images; if whilst they acknowledge Christ to have instituted the blessed sacrament in both kinds, they command it to be administered but in one; and pray in an unknown tongue,

tongue, though *St. Paul* in almost a whole chapter, shews the folly and unreasonableness of it. These are errors which do not concern my argument; and yet even here, I should be very unwilling to pronounce any sentence against the men who are unhappily thus mistaken; but surely, that religion cannot be very sound or true, which is corrupted with such fundamental abuses.

This makes the difference between those errors, for which we separate from the church of *Rome*, and those controversies that sometimes arise among protestants. The former are in matters of the greater consequences, such as directly tend to overthrow the integrity of faith, and the purity of our worship; and therefore such as are in their own nature destructive of the very essentials of christianity. But our differences do not at all concern the foundations either of faith or worship; being only such, which good men, if they be otherwise diligent and sincere in their enquiry, may differ in, without any prejudice to themselves, or any just reflection upon the truth of their common profession. I proceed to shew secondly, that such differences as these, ought not to hinder any persons from not agreeing together, not only in a common charity, but if possible, in a common worship of God too.

This is what *St. Paul* here expressly exhorts these dissenting christians to, and earnestly prays to God, that he might see accomplished in them. That when they came together to the public offices of the church, to offer up their common prayers and thanksgivings to him, they might do it in the same form of words, and with the same affection of mind, both towards God, and to one another. “Now the God of patience and consolation, grant you to be like minded one towards another, according to Christ Jesus; that ye may
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with one mind, and one mouth glorify God, even the father of our lord Jesus Christ." Such was their duty to each other then, and the same is our duty to one another now.

And as to charity, God forbid that any differences in religion whatsoever, much less things of smaller concern, should ever make us uncharitable to our fellow christians. Indeed, our saviour foretold to his disciples, that there should some rise up from among their brethren, who would on this account, not only "put them out of their synagogues," but even think it religious to "kill them." But they were *Jews*, not christians, who were to do this; and to the scandal of our holy religion, we must acknowledge, that there are a sort of men who now call themselves christians, that still continue, even literally, to fulfil this prophecy, who not only cast us out of their synagogues, but as far as they can, deprive us of all hopes of salvation; nay, openly arm the whole world against us, teaching men to believe, that it is a work of piety to root us out of it, and that "whosoever killeth us, doth God service." But this, and many other of their errors, may serve to convince us, how little they have of the true spirit of christianity. But I hope there needs no argument to persuade you to observe that charity, the want of which we all of us so justly lament, as one of the most deplorable corruptions in popery itself.

If christianity commands us to love our enemies, it must be highly reasonable for us, not to hate our brethren; and indeed, whatever arguments we can use to justify our uncharitableness to others, will equally excuse them, in withholding their charity from us. For there is no honest, sincere christian, how erroneous soever, but what thinks himself in the right; and supposes us by differing from him, to be as far from the truth, as we do him,

for

for not agreeing with us. And if it be lawful for us to hate another solely on account of such differences; we must allow it to be equally as reasonable, for him to hate us. The apostle says, "by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another*." But we shall act directly contrary to this, if we make our hatred to our brother the great mark of our zeal for religion, and believe he loves Christ the most, who the least loves his fellow christians. We should rather with the apostle, consider the love of our dear master to us, even whilst we were enemies; and love those, who notwithstanding their errors, may be still his and our friends; and not think those unworthy of our charity, whom we piously presume God will not think unworthy of his favour. For supposing they should be mistaken, yet we ourselves are but men, and may also err; and they as much think us in the wrong, as we do them; and perhaps, it must be left to the day of judgment to determine who is in the right. But should they be mistaken, yet I am sure our uncharitableness, is not the way to convince them of their error, but quite the reverse. If then we are, what we esteem ourselves to be, the *strong in faith*, let us remember, that though charity be their duty as well as ours, yet it is to such as we are, that St. Paul exhorts, "to bear the infirmities of the weak, and to receive one another as Christ also hath received us, to the glory of God."

But such differences as these should not lessen our charity, nor hinder us from joining together in the same common worship of God, with one another. These dissenting christians, notwithstanding all their heats and contentions, did "with one mouth glorify God," even when their differences would not suffer them to do it with *one heart*; they

* John 13. 35.

they united in one common worship, though not in opinion or affection with one another. But where mens errors are such, as to subvert the very essentials of our religious worship, it is in vain to hope for any communion with them, in the public service of God; we must not destroy the principles of christianity, out of a zeal to enlarge the communion of christians. We should be very weak indeed, if for the sake of praying to God with the papist, we must also pray with him to the blessed virgin and saints: or rather than be excluded their churches, we should bow down before their images; and not only worship their host, but even give up our right to the cup in the sacrament, only because we might receive it in their company. To lessen the differences of christians, and enlarge our communion so far as we safely may, is no doubt a desirable thing; for it has never gone well with the church of Christ, since men have been so narrow spirited, as to mix the controversies of faith, with their public forms; and to make their liturgies, instead of being offices of devotion to God, become tests and censures of the opinions of their brethren. But yet, the truths of christianity must not be sacrificed to the peace of christians; nor God's honour be given up, to preserve unity and communion, with one another. But where men differ in points that do not so affect their religious service; but that God may be truly worshipped, and communion with our fellow christians be also preserved; in such cases our dissentions ought not to lessen our charity, nor yet break our unity; we may thus differ, and yet, "with one mind; and one mouth, glorify God." This brings me to consider, *thirdly*, that it is the duty of us all, especially of the stronger christians, not only to pray for such an union, but also heartily labour,
and

and earnestly endeavour to stir up others, to get it effected.

As to what concerns the whole body of the catholic church on earth, so many are the disputes among the several parties of it, and some of them in points almost essential to the foundations of christianity, that whilst men resolve not to suffer the plainest arguments to convince them of their errors, it is in vain to hope ever to see things brought to such a temper, as we could wish; especially, whilst that part which is the most corrupt, has cut off all possibility of attaining it, by arrogating to herself an unwarrantable infallibility, and authority over others, and will neither reform her own abuses, nor admit any into her communion, that will not profess the same errors with herself. So that all we can wish for is, to love as brethren, and live together in charity, till we can happily unite, in one common faith and worship of God. But for us, who by God's mercy are delivered from the errors and superstitions, of the church of *Rome*, and are so well agreed in a common profession of the same faith, or at least in all the necessary points of it; and I hope notwithstanding all our lesser differences, in a common love and charity to one other; I cannot see, why we should not also be united in the same common worship to God too.

It is not my present design, to shew how little reason there is for any one to separate from the offices of the church of *England*, upon the account of those few exceptions, that some have made thereto. But that one concession of many of those who, though they in general separate from us, yet freely allow of occasional communion with us, sufficiently shews what real ground there is, for those scruples which have so long kept them from our worship. Indeed, the things for which some now

forfake us, were the very same in the beginning of the reformation, when there was no separation from our church; but the old non-conformists, though they disliked some things in our worship, yet freely declared they thought it a crime to dissent on that account. And they who now separate from us, because of those few alterations that have been made for the order and decency of our public worship, must for the same reason, have separated from all the churches of the christian world, for fifteen hundred years. However, since mens scruples are unaccountable, and some will differ even about indifferent things; and too long experience has shewn us, that if ever we would accomplish the union so much recommended to us by our apostle, so advantageous to the church, and at this time * especially, so necessary to our peace and happy establishment, that it seems to be the only method left to settle and secure us; I say, if ever this be attained, it must be done by the rule St. Paul, proposed to the dissenting christians at that time; “we then that are strong in the faith, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.” And I cannot but think it becomes every good christian to consider, whether something may not yet be done for the sake of peace, and to bring things to such a TEMPER †, that both order and decency may still be preserved, and yet our unity no longer broken.

And for exhortation to so good and christian a work, shall I represent to you, the example of our blessed saviour’s condescension to us; how he came down from heaven, “took upon him the form of a servant, and being made in the likeness of a sinful man, humbled himself even to the death of the cross for us?†” How he still bears, not only
with

* Preached in 1689. † See the petition of the archbishop and bishops to king James II. ‡ Phil. 2. 6, 7.

with our infirmities, but with our sins too; and thereby teaches us, how we ought “also to love one another?” or, rather shall I shew you, how far such a blessed union as this, would conduce to the glory of God, to the security of our religion, and to the promotion of peace, charity, and piety among us. But I need not urge this, nor what a dishonour our divisions have already brought to the reformation, and thereby stopt the progress of it. Great, doubtless is the advantages which our enemies have hoped to make, from those contests they with so much pains labour to keep up among us; and surely there needs no other argument to excite every true protestant to endeavour all he can, to compose our differences, than to consider, who they are that we please, and whose interests we serve, by the continuance of them. Let us add to this, what great obligations our holy religion lays on us, to “follow after those things that make for peace, and whereby we may edify one another*.” Our saviour says, “by this shall all men know, that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another †.” And St. Paul thus exhorts us, “if it be possible, as much as in us lies, to live peaceably with all men. ‡” And bids us “to mark them which cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which we have learnt, and to avoid them ||.” With what an affectionate earnestness, doth he address all christians, “if there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be *like minded*, having the *same love*, being of *one accord*, of *one mind* †. And permit me, with the same charity of St. Paul, to apply all this to those unhappy divisions, that now so much prevail among us christians; and beseech

* Rom. 14. 19. † John 13. 35. ‡ Rom. 12. 18.

|| Rom. 16. 17. † Phil. 2. 1, 2.

befeech them by these endearing considerations, to pursue the things which make for our peace; and to close those breaches, which the malice of our enemies have too successfully begun, and our own weakness have too fatally continued among us.

There never was a time since a separation first happened, in which we have had greater reason to consider of such an union; or a fairer opportunity than what the present affords to have it accomplished, if we are but careful rightly to improve it *. Hitherto we have defended our church by our arguments; let us now by our charity, settle and establish it, and by uniting in the strictest league of friendship with one another, secure it against all danger from our declared enemies. This will indeed render both ourselves, and our religion to the good esteem of all men; and may be a happy presage, that the blessed time, spoken of in the sacred prophecy, is now ready to be revealed: when the church of Christ being purged from those corruptions, that have so long defaced its beauty, shall again appear in its primitive purity. When all heresy and schism being every where abolished, and the mystery of iniquity laid fully open, and the man of sin destroyed; true religion and sincere piety shall again reign throughout the world.

O blessed state of the church militant here on earth! the glorious antepast of that peace and piety, which God has prepared for his church triumphant in heaven! who would not wish to see those days, when a general reformation, a true zeal, and a perfect charity, shall universally prevail; and that we may be all united in the same faith and worship, the same communion and fellowship one with another? When all pride and prejudice, all interests and designs being submitted to the honour of
God,

* See several treatises wrote in favour of this since 1749, printed by Millar and Griffiths.

God, and the discharge of our duty, the holy scriptures shall again triumph over the vain traditions of men; and religion no longer take its denomination from little sects and factions, but we shall be content with the same common primitive names of *christians* and *brethren*; and live together as becomes our character, in brotherly love and christian charity with one another. And who can tell but such a change as this, is nigh at hand, and which may be soon accomplished, would we all but seriously labour to perfect the great work, which the providence of God has so gloriously begun, and establish that love and unity among us, which may afterwards diffuse itself into distant parts of the christian world. And tho' we may not be so happy, as to see any such blessed effect on our endeavours, yet this we are sure of, that we shall not lose our reward in heaven; when to have contributed, though in the least degree, to the healing those divisions we so unhappily labour under, will be esteemed a greater honour, than to have silenced all the cavils of our enemies; and be rewarded with blessings "more than all the stars in the firmament for number."

F I N I S.